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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE UNITY OF KING HENRY THE EIGHTH

by



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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1969

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE UNITY OF KING HENRY THE EIGHTH submitted by Martin Power in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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INTRODUCTION

Henry VIII was included in the First Folio Shakespeare, whereas the editors rejected many spurious or doubtful plays. There is no historical evidence, apart from speculation based on The Two Noble Kinsmen,¹ to suggest that the play is the result of collaboration. If Shakespeare did collaborate in The Two Noble Kinsmen, the absence of this play from the First Folio suggests that the editors attempted to restrict themselves to plays by Shakespeare alone. Until 1850, the presence of a collaborator in Henry VIII (in parts other than the Prologue and Epilogue) was not entertained as a conjecture. James Spedding² began the great controversy by alleging that rather more than half the First Folio text was the work of Fletcher. He based the non-aesthetic part of his argument on a computation of the proportion of lines ending with a weakly-stressed syllable in each scene of Henry VIII. Those scenes where the proportion of such lines was high he ascribed to Fletcher, since Fletcher commonly uses a higher proportion of them than does Shakespeare. The weaknesses of Spedding's statistical methods have been exposed by Alexander³ and Wilson Knight.⁴ The more complex music of the poetry is ignored; the fact that different kinds of verse may be more appropriate in different scenes is also overlooked. However, in 1949 Partridge⁵ produced more formidable statistical evidence based on the different authors' different preferences between such verbal forms as "you" and "ye". But this evidence in its turn has been subjected to close scrutiny by R. A. Foakes, to whose important article the reader

is referred.⁶ Foakes argues that the compositors at the printing-house sometimes made their own choices between such words, and that a play set up by two different compositors might defeat the ingenuity even of a Partridge. At present, the scientific evidence about the authorship is still highly inconclusive.

As this is so, there is still wide freedom for those who wish to make judgment of the authorship issue on the basis of aesthetic discrimination. Such speculation is by its nature perilous and productive of debate. Nevertheless the authorship issue and the aesthetic issue have always been inextricably interlinked: Spedding began his work with aesthetic judgment. We who make subjective judgments cannot claim the finality that science (sometimes prematurely) boasts to possess. Nor can we exclude the freakish possibility in the present case that Fletcher indeed collaborated, but fell so completely under the influence of Shakespeare that he wrote very differently from the way he usually did. What I try to emphasise is the continual sense of Shakespeare's presence in all parts of Henry VIII.

I believe that the local analysis of verse is helpful in assessing its quality: of course any individual line must be considered in its context for a full evaluation. In my first chapter, as an approach to the problem of Henry VIII, I look at the verse of Fletcher and attempt to suggest its lack of empathetic quality, its inability to be serious in the particular way characteristic of Shakespeare. This is not to deny the verse of Fletcher rhetoric, theatrical effectiveness, and other real virtues. I am aware of the

possible distortion that may result from the attempt in the first chapter to define what I see as limitations of Fletcher. The reader who wishes to find a sympathetic account of Fletcher is recommended to the essay by Una Ellis-Fermor.⁷

In looking at the verse of Fletcher, I want to define that failing which is reflected in large in the lack of moral design in the plays of Fletcher. The remainder and bulk of the thesis is a corresponding careful analysis of the verse of Henry VIII trying to show that here we do find this extra or at least different quality throughout. From this local analysis of the verse, there should be a gradual emergence of a larger moral design. This should give evidence of the unified conception of the play. I want to suggest that a single moral intelligence is felt to permeate the entire play. Of this design that should emerge, the following skeletal outlines may be useful, providing that we remember that the skeleton is not in itself the design. I see two interpenetrating patterns each of which enriches the significance of the other. The first is the very obvious pattern of "falls" - Buckingham, Wolsey, Katherine - which is finally reversed with the vindication and reinstatement of Cranmer.⁸ The second is the emergence of women from patient acceptance of Fate (II, iii; II, iv) to glory and coronation (IV, i; IV, ii). Both of these patterns may be seen as the triumph of "grace" over "law", kindness over strictness; or (slightly differently) we pass from a stage in which the action is private, anxious, dark and hidden, to a stage where it is public, confirmed, open and celebratory. But the pattern as thus far outlined may be seen only as an outer manifestation of a

central pattern concerning the King. The King goes through a period of anxiety (the divorce), to symbolic maturity, represented by public appearance, and finally by the christening of his child. In his dark phase he is dependent on the ambiguous Wolsey: then Wolsey becomes disposable. The fourth act is celebratory after the previous three, but the fifth act recapitulates the entire previous four, proceeding from a renewed "dark" phase (the conspiracy, the difficult labour) to a new and more climactic celebration.

The subjectivity of analytic criticism, and its sad limitations as a guide to the enjoyment of poetry, must be acknowledged. However, I apologise at the outset for any lapses into what may seem eccentricity. I regret any occasions when (in attempting to be lucid) I appear polemical or arrogant. I regret any extravagant judgments that suggest mere enthusiasm, but would find it impossible fully to respond to a work without a measure of surrender and warmth. I hope that I do not convey the impression that I disrespect the ingenious labours of those who approach the play from standpoints other than my own. I hope that the reader will not be offended.

Molli paulatim flavescet campus arista,
Incultisque rubens pendeat sentibus uva,
Et durae quercus sudabunt roscida mella.

VIRGIL.

CHAPTER ONE

If Fletcher indeed collaborated with Shakespeare on Henry VIII, then he so far surpassed even the best of his other work in this particular effort, that credulity is strained more than a little. There is no real critical debate about Fletcher. The critics are either willing, or else reluctant, witnesses for the prosecution.¹ The most damaging evidence against a poet comes when those who begin as apologists for him are compelled to make vital concessions: this seems a common occurrence among those who approach Fletcher even with the most stubborn open-mindedness. I believe that the common verdict is just. I believe that any resemblances between Shakespeare and Fletcher are superficial. A study of Fletcher is rewarding in as much as it teaches us to appreciate the deeper, as opposed to the more superficial, merits of Shakespeare.

Muriel Bradbrook gives us the essence of Fletcher's triviality in her brief remarks on the poet.

. . . there is no verbal framework of any kind; the collapse of the poetic is found to be directly related to the collapse of the moral structure; for they were interdependent.²

We shall find it easier and more entertaining to demonstrate what is meant by the "collapse of the poetic structure" than by the "collapse of the moral structure". This can be done by a consideration of Fletcher's poetry at its best.³ We must recognize what this poetry lacks, even at its most enjoyable. We may begin with a characteristically rhetorical passage from Philaster.

I tell thee, Pharamond,
 When thou art King, look I be dead and rotten
 And my name ashes; For hear me Pharamond,
 This very ground thou goest on, this fat earth
 My father's friends made fertile by their faiths,
 Before that day of shame, shall gape and swallow
 Thee and thy nation, like a hungry grave,
 Into her hidden bowels: Prince, it shall,
 By Nemesis it shall.

(Vol. 1, Philaster, Act I, p. 80)⁴

This is entertaining, but the excessive alliteration of "this fat earth/
 My father's friends made fertile by their faiths," shows a certain laziness, and the development of the idea of the earth gaping is without any genuine emotional realisation, so that the threat must end with the rather unconvincing rumble "Prince, it shall,/ By Nemesis it shall". The passage is too slow off the ground to capture directly the emotions of the speaker: the rhetoric is too theatrical: "this very ground thou goest on" is swollen and empty. The "hungry grave" should be a climactic image: it fails because it is too far divorced from "this fat earth": we are too conscious of the prepared effect. Consider how very differently Shakespeare would manage a solemn protestation.

Camillo,
 Not for Bohemia, nor the pomp that may
 Be thereat gleaned, for all the sun sees or
 The close earth wombs, or the profound seas hides
 In unknown fathoms, will I break my oath
 To this my fair beloved.

(Winter's Tale, IV, iv, 497-502)

The impulsive warmth of the speaker infuses itself into the verse. The image "gleaned" is wonderfully surprising and exact. The progression of ideas is natural: not for Bohemia, nor for all the visible world, nor for all the hidden world. The image of the sun as perceiver gives force to the powerful phrase "the close earth wombs": a whole active

cosmos is created. The image of the bowels of the earth is commonplace: but whereas Fletcher employs it in a commonplace manner, Shakespeare (with great economy) brings it alive. "Close" suggests an active secretiveness in concealing a prepared design, so that it adds to the mysteriousness of the unusual verb "wombs". After all this extravagant expansiveness, how effective is the plain affirmation, "will I break my oath/ To this my fair beloved". There is no need for the theatrical buttress: "Prince, it shall,/ By Nemesis it shall".

On rare occasions, Fletcher may almost deceive us.

. . . be sure
 You credit anything the light gives light to
 More than a man. Rather believe the sea
 Weeps for the ruin'd merchant when he roars;
 Rather the wind courts but the pregnant sails
 When the strong cordage cracks; rather the sun
 Comes but to kiss the fruit in wealthy autumn
 When all falls blasted.

(Vol. 1, Maid's Tragedy, Act II, p. 24)

Nowhere does Fletcher do better than this. But it is expert pastiche of Shakespeare rather than the thing itself. To show what is wrong here it would be necessary to consider the context of the passage: the absence in the play as a whole of a poetic framework sufficient to reinforce this sudden outburst of lavish imagery of "the sea", "the wind", "the pregnant sails", "sun", "fruit", and "wealthy autumn". The jewelled passage is too consciously planned: for a brief space Fletcher imitates the sumptuousness of the Shakespearean manner, but the little pictures of the merchant, and of the ship at sea, exist for their own sake: they are rhetorical amplification, but not emotional intensification. If we look back at the passage from The Winter's Tale,

we are struck by the lack of irrelevant ornamentation: everything relates to the immediate emotional situation arising from the action: the "profound seas" reflect the speaker's idealistic yearnings for truth. The passage also has an important place in the general framework of the play. We are given some idea of the cunning and concealed operations of natural forces, the secret labour of the earth that will in the course of the time come to fullness, the ambiguous activity of the seas. The relevance of all this to the pattern of the play, with its voyages and shipwreck, and its twenty years of hidden development, must be obvious.

Eugene Waith bases his defence of Fletcher - in as much as it is a defence - on the quality of Fletcher's rhetoric. "They are in the highest degree declamatory plays," he argues.⁵ Waith is absolutely right: as soon as we concern ourselves with the suitability of the words to the emotional situation, a great dislocation between rhetoric and action is apparent. It is very obvious in the scene where Evadne kills the King.

I was once fair
Once I was lovely, not a blowing rose
More chastely sweet; till thou, thou, thou, foul canker,
(Stir not) didst poison me.

(Vol. 1, Maid's Tragedy, Act V, p. 62)

The melodramatic "thou, thou, thou", insufficient in itself, must be reinforced by the even more melodramatic "stir not". The dramatist is unable to inform the verse with the sense of action: he is forced to use crude and violent expedients. This is even more palpable in the suicide scene in Bonduca.

FIRST DAUGHTER. All your Rome,
 If I were proud and loved ambition,
 If I were lustful, all your ways of pleasure,
 If I were greedy, all the wealth you conquer -

BONDUCA. Make haste.

FIRST DAUGHTER. I will. (Drinks) - could not entice to live
 But two short hours, this frailty.
 (Vol. 6, Bonduca, Act IV, Sc. iv)

Fletcher is more concerned with the syntactical development of the sentence than with the emotions arising from the situation. Necessary stage-business embarrasses Fletcher because he has no faith in the significance of the action. The dying speech of Penius betrays the same failure.

 Carry my last words
 To the great general: Kiss his hands, and say:
 My soul I give to heaven, my fault to justice,
 Which I have done upon myself; my virtue
 (If ever there was any in poor Penius)
 Made more, and happier, light on him - I faint -
 And where there is a foe I wish him fortune.
 I die - lie lightly on my ashes, gentle earth.
 (Vol. 6, Bonduca, Act IV, Sc. iii)

The elaborate distribution of parts, "my soul . . . my fault . . . my virtue" is entirely abstract; the parenthetical "if ever there was any in poor Penius" is a weary rhetorical trope; the vagueness of "made more and happier" carries logical but no emotional force; and the random gallantry of "where there is a foe I wish him fortune" is fatuous. Penius dies by convenient stages - "I faint . . . I die . . ." - without the event making any serious intrusion upon the verse or our attention. Lastly we must consider how Fletcher writes when conjured up by Spedding.

I thank you honest lord. Remember me

In all humility unto his highness:
 Say his long trouble now is passing
 Out of this world. Tell him in death I blessed him,
 For so I will; mine eyes grow dim. Farewell
 My lord. Griffith farewell. Nay Patience,
 You must not leave me yet. I must to bed,
 Call in more women.

(IV, ii, 160-7)

The action creates the poetry. Everything is natural and in its proper place: the gentle courtesy towards Campeius; the restrained message to the King; the involuntary "mine eyes grow dim"; the plain farewells; the affectionate chiding of the gentlewoman; the stoical acceptance of the inevitable: "I must to bed". There is no superfluity. The language is plain and noble: the character of the Queen is evident in every line: the rhythms are masterly. Everything directs us towards the seriousness of the action, but without crudity or violence.

Fletcher's best plays are his light comedies. He has a certain facility with a brittle kind of verse suitable for satirical comedy.

The Wild-Goose Chase is full of this rapid but disposable verse.

We expected husbands
 Out of your documents and taught behaviours;
 Excellent husbands; thought men'd run stark mad on's,
 Men of all ages and all states; we expected
 An inundation of desires and offers,
 A torrent of trim suitors; all we did
 Or said, or purpos'd, to be spells about us,
 Spells to provoke.

(Vol. 4, The Wild-Goose Chase, Act III, p. 347)

The balance of this is characteristic: observe the pattern of returns:
 "expected . . . husbands . . . husbands . . . men . . . men . . .
 expected . . . spells . . . spells". The rather loose phrase "men of
 all ages and all states" is mainly designed to carry on the alliterative
 pattern: "men . . . mad . . . men . . . stark . . . states". It is

impossible to deny Fletcher's achievement in comedy: but the comedy is a comedy of surface. The interest lies in the patterning of the intrigue, and the corresponding pattern of the verse. Falling in love is a madness useful to set an intrigue in motion. There is no attempt to expose the capacity of human beings for self-deception. Many of the possibilities of Shakespearean comedy are excluded from the world of Fletcher's comedy.

When Fletcher turns to tragic themes his frigidity becomes more apparent.⁶

I am deaf and dull to counsel: inflamed blood
Hears nothing but my will.
(Vol. 9, Cupid's Revenge, Act I, p. 234)

The abstract notions "inflamed", "blood", and "will", do not move us so much as they should, because we do not respond to such a direct appeal to our emotions. We do not want merely to be informed by the characters of the emotions they are supposed to be feeling. The verse claims from us a violent response which it does nothing to merit. It is like a bout of monetary inflation.

I am hell
Till you my dear lord, shoot your light into me
The beams of your forgiveness. I am soul-sick
And wither with the fear of one condemned
Till I have got your pardon.
(Vol. 1, Maid's Tragedy, Act IV, p. 50)

The over-explicit imagery betrays a characteristic hollowness: "hell . . . shoot your light . . . soul-sick . . . wither". Fletcher is forced to be so explicit from a failure to write verse which truly embodies feeling. We are on the road towards Restoration heroic tragedy.

O that I had a sea
 Within my breast to quench this fire I feel.
 More circumstances will but fan this fire.
 (Vol. 1, Philaster, Act III, p. 107)

"This fire" is a mere dead metaphor, like "ce feu" in Corneille. The ashen fall of "circumstances" hardly suggests that the fire is too urgent.

Fletcher's style is characteristically hard, brittle, and inclining towards frigidity: he is capable of verse which has a thin and piping melancholy lucidity, but this occurs when he is inspired by Shakespeare. Bellario's story in Philaster is full of echoes from Twelfth Night; Caratach comforting Hengo in Bonduca is inspired by Cymbeline. The prettiness of the treatment of Bellario is nothing more than prettiness.

. . . after you were gone
 I grew acquainted with my heart, and search'd
 What stirr'd it so. Alas, I found it love,
 Yet far from lust, for could I but 've lived
 In presence of you, I had had my end.
 (Vol. 1, Philaster, Act V, p. 146-7)

The complexity of Twelfth Night partly consists of the way in which the scenes between Orsino and Viola present the possibility of different kinds of love having different validity. Fletcher abstracts from these scenes their most immediately appealing quality, but he tears the pathos from the complex intellectual framework in which it exists. Fletcher angles for the feelings with the hook of simplicity: "Alas, I found it love". He does the same in Bonduca, where Hengo is dying.

HENGO. Good uncle,
 Good noble uncle, weep not.

CARATACH. O my chicken,
 My dear boy, what shall I lose?
 (Vol. 6, Bonduca, Act V, Sc. iii)

Fletcher has no poetic control over this device of simplicity: he rapidly becomes maudlin. Shakespeare does not lose poetic control.

The bird is dead
That we have made so much on.
(Cymbeline, IV, ii, 197-8)

Shakespeare gives us the feeling of simple spontaneous emotion, but his mind is alive as ever to the generation of new imagery.

Say Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,
Found thee a way (out of his wrack) to rise in.
(III, ii, 435-7)

Fletcher gives a pale reflection of some Shakespearean devices: he can never imitate the full, complex, unsleeping Shakespearean method. Fletcher's sentimentality works upon our most superficial feelings; Shakespeare's pathos upon our full emotions.

Fletcher attempts to compensate for the failure of his poetic imagination by an external extravagance and violence. This empty extravagance, especially as it manifests itself in the plays written in collaboration with Beaumont, has been well described by J. F. Danby.

The characters fling themselves into disparate roles, adapting one extreme stance after another with an all-or-nothing wilfulness . . . an adult scheme is being broken up and replaced by adolescent intensities . . . The world of Beaumont and Fletcher is a violent, extreme, arbitrary, sudden and wilful thing.⁷

Beaumont and Fletcher dabble in the grotesque and the taboo: they choose outrageous plots: they sensationalise. The abrupt reversals that characterise The Maid's Tragedy and A King and No King might be proper in comedy: but Fletcher uses the machinery of comedy in improper contexts.

The Maid's Tragedy, Philaster, and A King and No King have drawn a disproportionate amount of critical attention when we consider the

general neglect of Fletcher's work: but then this is because they are positively bad, unashamedly decadent, and therefore interesting. They pretend to support a system of values, but they do not: for "love", "loyalty" and "honour" become empty words; they pretend to be a serious portrayal of deep emotions, but they are not. Perhaps this unashamed quality is the particular stamp of Beaumont. For Fletcher on his own seems to have preferred either comedies which make no pretences to values other than the most cynical, such as Monsieur Thomas or The Wild-Goose Chase, or else tragicomedies of a more admittedly silly kind, such as The Island Princess or Thierry and Theodoret. In these latter plays any kind of distraction will serve: the preposterous melodrama of Queen Brunhalt wickedly deceiving Thierry into thinking he must kill Ordella is empty diversion. It will be found very difficult to select a passage of any length from any of these plays which does not betray the shallowness of thought evident in the general design.

Fletcher made two attempts to write more sustained and elevated drama: Bonduca and Valentinian. Bonduca is painfully dull. The play alternates between lifeless debate and meaningless action. The many battles and alarums are totally implausible; the suicides empty and melodramatic. The fifth act does not develop from what has gone before. On a close reading, the scene in which Hengo dies falls apart.

And, noble uncle, when my bones are ashes,
Think of your little nephew!
(Vol. 6, Bonduca, Act V, Sc. iii)

The sentimentality and triviality of expression must be condemned. Fletcher seems aware that Bonduca is a leaden failure: he desperately includes comic relief. The dead Bonduca becomes the love-object of the

soldier Petillius.

I did but see her
And see her die; she stinks by this time strongly,
Abominably stinks.

(Vol. 6, Bonduca, Act V, Sc. ii)

Comic relief is excellent where it adds a new dimension to our appreciation of the tragic fact; where, as here, it exists merely to divert us from the attempt at tragedy, it is worthless.

Valentinian is perhaps Fletcher's most ambitious play. It keeps our interest for a while; but this is mainly due to the somewhat prurient treatment of the rape of Lucina. Lucina is just a little too violent and shrill.

Believe me, I shall never make a whore, sir.
. . . No family I now can claim, no country,
But only Caesar's whore . . .
What can your honours now and empire make me
But a more glorious whore?

(Vol. 4, Valentinian, Act III, p. 34-7)

Subsequent to the rape of Lucina, the play degenerates into a tedious intrigue. But the play has one scene interesting for any student of Henry VIII: that in which Aecius, betrayed by his friend Maximus, laments his fall from the emperor's favour. Valentinian dates from 1614, so it is very probable that Fletcher could have been influenced by Henry VIII, performed in 1613. This would account for the echoes of the Buckingham scene. It is the only scene in Fletcher that has echoes of Henry VIII that are at all impressive. The reason seems to be conscious imitation of Shakespeare by Fletcher.

At one point especially, the rhythms remind us of the Buckingham scene.

If ye love me,
Let that word serve for all, be gone and leave me;

I have some little practice with my soul,
 And then the sharp'st sword's welcom'st; go,
 Pray be gone, ye have obeyed me living,
 Be not for shame now stubborn; so I thank ye,
 And fare ye well, a better fortune guide ye.
 (Vol. 4, Valentinian, Act IV, p. 65)

The resemblance of the cadences is striking; however, the Henry VIII scene glows with imagery that is not present in Fletcher.

You few that loved me
 And dare be bold to weep for Buckingham,
 His noble friends and fellows, whom to leave
 Is only bitter to him, only dying,
 Go with me like good angels to my end,
 And when the long divorce of steel falls on me
 Make of your prayers one sweet sacrifice
 And lift my soul to heaven.
 (II, i, 71-8)

There is nothing in the Fletcher scene to parallel the beautiful images of the angels and the sacrifice. The extra quality of evocative power in the precision of "few" and "dare be bold" is absent. It is true that Fletcher manages to capture a little of the gentlemanliness of Buckingham in Aecius' "some little practice with my soul". But one must consider not the quality sustained over four or five lines, but the quality sustained over fifty. The lines quoted from Fletcher are certainly the best in the scene. When we consider the Fletcher scene as a whole, we find a context of banal heroics and stale tropes.

Let the fool fear dying,
 Or he that weds a woman for his honour,
 Dreaming no other life to come but kisses;
 Aecius is not now to learn to suffer . . .
 I am to triumph, friends, and more than Caesar,
 For Caesar fears to die, I love to die.
 (Vol. 4, Valentinian, Act IV, p. 63)

The device of the character naming himself has here none of the force of freshness it has in "And dare be bold to weep for Buckingham," where

the alliteration and delicate cadence are highly effective. The opposition "Caesar fears to die, I love to die," is mechanical and empty of emotional content. Then comes a passage which seems full of echoes of the Buckingham scene, but without the brilliance. A long quotation seems justified.

No more, go, go I say;
 Show me no signs of sorrow, I deserve none:
 Dare any man lament I should die nobly?
 Am I grown old to have such enemies?
 When I am dead speak honourably of me
 That is, preserve my memory from dying;
 Then if you needs must weep your ruined master
 A tear or two will seem well: this I charge ye
 (Because ye say ye yet love old Aecius)
 See my poor body burnt, and some to sing
 About my pile what I have done and suffered,
 If Caesar kill not that too; at your banquets
 When I am gone, if any chance to number
 The times that have been sad and dangerous
 Say how I fell, and 'tis sufficient:
 No more I say: he that laments my end
 By all the gods dishonours me; be gone
 And suddenly, and wisely, from these dangers.
 My death is catching else.

(Vol. 4, Valentinian, Act IV, p. 64)

Of course Aecius is not saying the same thing as Buckingham. He is saying something much more conventional, disclaiming against

this wet weakness
 To drown a glorious death in child or woman.
 (Vol. 4, Valentinian, Act IV, p. 64)

The scene is sufficiently like the Buckingham farewell for the purposes of comparison. Characteristically, Fletcher draws out pathos from the arbitrary extravagance of the notion that the friends who weep will become "enemies": the whole basis of the scene is a rhetorical and conventional posture, not a credible human situation like Buckingham's. The verse reflects this basic difference: the looseness of "show me no

signs of sorrow" betrays a lack of urgency that rapidly becomes more apparent.

When I am dead, speak honourably of me,
That is, preserve my memory from dying.

"That is" lamely introduces a lame thought. Then comes the empty phrase "a tear or two will seem well". There is nothing in the Buckingham scene as weak as "a tear or two will seem well": in that scene the tears come from irresistible surges of emotion, and a man is "bold to weep". The interposed "Because ye say you yet love old Aecius" is a poor trick, the kind of too obvious trope that the mature Shakespeare would avoid. A particularly Fletcherian weakness is exposed in "If Caesar kill not that too", where the emphatic "that" is too weak and abstract for effective dramatic verse. Fletcher has worked out the logic of the image, but has not judged its effectiveness for conveying emotion. The lines immediately following are inspired by the Buckingham scene. But Shakespeare's lines are absolutely economical.

Farewell.
And when you would say something that is sad
Speak how I fell. I have done, and God forgive me.
(II, i, 134-6)

This has the urgency of a telegram. There is no unnecessary specificity. Shakespeare has "when"; Fletcher "at your banquets" and the further superfluity "when I am gone"; Shakespeare, the evocative "something that is sad"; Fletcher, the diffuse "the times that have been sad and dangerous". Shakespeare comes to a period with "speak how I fell"; Fletcher limps along with "and 'tis sufficient". With the same number of syllables, Shakespeare crams in two more ideas and an exquisite cadence: "I have

done, and God forgive me". Fletcher returns to bravado with an oath "by all the gods". Shakespeare's is a serious, meditative pathos; Fletcher's pathos is journeywork to distract between bouts of empty heroics. Those who find Fletcher's hand in the Buckingham scene must explain why the poet who could write such exquisite work in 1613, could in 1614 produce such palpably inferior versions of some of his own finest lines.

One could say much more about the technical virtuosity of the Buckingham scene. The evocative power of a line such as "Hear what I say and then go home and lose me" (II, i, 57) is equalled by nothing in Fletcher: there is a superb fusion of the connotations of "home" and "lose". The imagery has tact and lucidity.

And if I have a conscience, let it sink me
Even as the axe falls, if I be not faithful.
(II, i, 60-1)

The object nearest by provides exactly the right image. The delicate balance of the phrase "even as the axe falls" suggests the swift, silent fall of the axe. The necessary stage-action provides the poetry with memorable symbolism.

To the waterside I must conduct your grace.
(II, i, 95)

But any comparison between the two dramatists which begins as a comparison of their technical poetic skills - though this in itself is enough - can not stop there. Inevitably, we pass on to consider the different levels of seriousness on which they work. We shall consider closely the sustained elevation, the coherence both intellectual and emotional of Henry VIII, when we come to a close analysis of the text of the play. The limitations of Bonduca and Valentinian - Fletcher's

most sustained attempts at serious drama - in these respects are clear. We never believe in the heroism of Bonduca, the chastity of Lucina, or the nobility of Aecius, because we never feel that Fletcher really believes in them either. A sense of devaluation accompanies Fletcher's presentation of violent action or great suffering. We never feel with Fletcher any sense of accumulating knowledge as the play proceeds: there are no resonances from earlier scenes to later, but rather as one part of the plot is concluded, it should be dismissed from the memory. Shakespeare's work abounds in such resonances, found not least in passages of reduced intensity. In considering Henry VIII we must pay great attention to the high quality of Shakespeare's mortarwork, those transitional passages and incidental conversations that hold the play fast in the firmest unity.

There are no real characters in Fletcher's drama. His heroes are full of contradictory impulses. Fletcher buys short-term diversion by allowing his characters to act inconsistently. His heroines are either insubstantial or objectionable. Coleridge comments on them. Then the virtuous women: either crazy superstitions of a merely bodily negation of having been acted upon, or strumpets in their imagination, and whores.⁸

The foresaken Aspatia comes into the first category: she is entirely insubstantial. Into the second category come Panthea in A King and No King, and Lucina in Valentinian. These heroines assert their chastity, but show too great a fondness for coming close to what they are supposed to shun. Panthea almost lures on her supposed brother. Lucina is equally shrill before and after being raped. No heroine in Fletcher is convincing.

It has been argued⁹ that the characters in Henry VIII are also inconsistent. But any doubleness or obscurity about motives in Henry VIII is part of a pre-conceived plan, that we shall be considering as we examine the play. All that needs to be emphasised now is that nothing is done gratuitously or for short-term effect. But beyond this, it seems absurd to talk of the "inconsistency" in Wolsey, and the "inconsistency" in the characters of Fletcher, as though they were in some way equivalent. The inconsistent characters in Fletcher are inconsistent as a result of the dramatist's poverty of imagination and frivolity of purpose. If Wolsey is in any way inconsistent, it is because there is too much of him: he is drawn with too great complexity and richness, almost, for the drama to bear. If there is a fault, it is the fault of a great dramatist. If it is unlikely that Fletcher had any hand in the portrayal of Wolsey, it also seems unlikely that Shakespeare needed him for Queen Katherine. The quality of Shakespeare's Katherine will be examined in its proper place. She is neither vapid like Aspatia, nor shrill like Lucina, nor like any of the women of Fletcher. These characters are not the play: but the genuinely human quality of their moral struggles is one important element giving the play life and warmth. They are none the less human for being presented in the complex thematic context of the play. In the remainder of the thesis I will be looking directly at the play. As for the conjecture regarding Fletcher, I share the opinion of Edgar Fripp.

He has not the thought, still less the ethics and religion, for these things . . . Wolsey and Katherine have had the moral experience of fifty Fletchers.¹⁰

CHAPTER TWO

Coleridge calls Henry VIII "a sort of historical mask or shew-play".¹ The judgment is as misleading as it is helpful. The play may have some qualities of a celebration-piece, but it is no "insubstantial pageant". The Prologue warns us against this error. We are promised matter "sad, high and working" (Prologue, 3). "Working" perhaps suggests the complex restorative process of which tears are only a beginning. Different sections of the audience will react to the play in different ways.

Those that can pity, here
May (if they think it well) let fall a tear,
The subject will deserve it. Such as give
Their money out in hope they may believe,
May here find truth too. Those that come to see
Only a show or two, and so agree
The play may pass, if they be still and willing
I'll undertake may see away their shilling
Richly in two short hours.
(Prologue, 5-13)

Some of the audience come "in hope they may believe", in other words, in the hope of enjoying the illusion of the theatre. Such will "find truth": they will find it easy to enter into the world of illusion, and they will also learn real history. But the ironic suggestion is that the audience will find more "truth" in the play than they are expecting. A few lines later this is made more explicit, where the Prologue calls the play "our chosen truth" (Prologue, 18). We are dealing with more than mere historical fact. Nevertheless, some of the audience come to see "only a show or two", without any interest in history or any larger "truth". They will not be disappointed: but they will be given much more than they demand. They are like the passive

and uncontributing recipients of magic, or of other matter "high and working": they need only be "still and willing". Then they will be rewarded "richly". They will see sumptuous processions and celebrations. But they will also, in spite of themselves, find the experience "richly" worthwhile. The Prologue makes it clear that there are different kinds of "show".

for gentle hearers, know,
To rank our chosen truth with such a show
As fool and fight is, beside forfeiting
Our own brains, and the opinion that we bring
To make that only true we now intend,
Will leave us never an understanding friend.
(Prologue, 17-22)

The poet proudly reminds us that he is using his "brains". The play justifies that brag: it is a play almost overloaded with thought. At the same time as the poet works upon the intelligence of the audience, however, he intends to work upon their generous emotions. The quibble on the word "understanding", which is used with reference to the groundlings, telescopes the notion "perceptive" with the notion "sympathetic". Shakespeare is aware that this is a particularly demanding play: it is a compliment to the intelligence and cultivation of his audience.

The first and happiest hearers of the town.
(Prologue, 24)

"For goodness' sake," the poet asks them, "be sad" (Prologue, 23-5). "For goodness' sake", in this context, is no empty colloquialism. The particular "happiness" of the hearers depends partly on their ability to be "sad", or serious. While the Prologue asks the audience to be serious, it emphasises the eventual goals of the process, "truth", "understanding", "goodness" and "happiness". Finally it implies that

although some occasions are not suitable for mirth, some occasions are,

And if you can be merry then, I'll say
A man may weep upon his wedding-day.
(Prologue, 31-2)

Here there seems to be some anticipation of a counter-movement, breaking away from the pattern of "falls". That the "weighty and serious" Prologue should conclude with the exciting promise of the word "wedding-day" is characteristic of the cunningly-woven complexity of Henry VIII.

The play has an alternative title, All is True. This ambivalent title deserves a little thought. Perhaps it is meant to imply that the final divine revelation will confer a validity on all human activity. Perhaps on the other hand it suggests that all human knowledge is equally relative. And then perhaps this speculation is over-subtle, and the title merely assures us of the historical accuracy of the play. Even if this is so, the gnomic phrase "all is true" brings us to the very heart of Henry VIII. It is above all a play about "truth". Bartlett's Concordance confirms our sense that the word has a very special importance in the play: it occurs twenty-four times, more often than in any other Shakespeare play. But there is no over-simplified version of "truth" in Henry VIII: everything depends on the fact that the journey towards truth is slow. The most important action of the play is a question of conscience: a slow, cloudy, inward action. "Conscience" occurs eighteen times, more often than in any other play in the Folio, and there is some emphasis on notions connected with confession. The major virtues which the play asserts are passive virtues: "patience", "obedience" and "learning". These virtues give the capacity to reserve judgment, and to

suppress pride. The words "learned" and "learning", taken together, occur sixteen times, an emphasis unique in Shakespeare. More than in any other of Shakespeare's history plays, there is an awareness of the difficulty of political decision-making. There is emphasis on the forces opposed to truth: the words "envy" and "envious" occur ten times; the words "malice" and "malicious" sixteen times; both notions occur more frequently in this than in any other play by Shakespeare. This pattern of words connected with the central notion "truth" penetrates every scene of the play. A careful analysis of the play suggests that this outwardly apparent pattern of words gives some indication of the underlying consistency of intellectual direction.

The poet is pre-occupied with the problem of finding out the "truth" from historical data. At times, he seems to reach an ambivalence at which the drama is in danger of breaking down. Perhaps the most crucial of these moments occurs when Henry explains his motivation for seeking the divorce (II, iv, 153-207). The King has already become involved with Anne Bullen, but we are obliged to believe in his integrity; otherwise the play disintegrates, and the structure becomes meaningless. We also have the King's word that in the matter of the divorce Wolsey had no sinister intention. This surprises us, since it means that Queen Katherine is wrong to suspect him. Wolsey is proud, ambitious, potentially ruthless: but in this matter he happens to have been innocent. We have been misled by court-rumour. The truth is much more complicated than we expected.

An unmitigated scepticism on the part of the dramatist would be impossible: the result would be a chaos of unrelated facts. Some inter-

pretative principle is necessary in order to give coherence to history. The play is not an arbitrary collection of facts, but a "chosen truth" (Prologue, 18). The "truth" depends partly on the actuality of the facts of history, but partly on the meaningfulness of the "choice". The interpretative principle informing Henry VIII is charity. This becomes clear in Katherine's praise of Griffith.

After my death I wish no other herald,
 No other speaker of my living actions
 To keep mine honour from corruption,
 But such an honest chronicler as Griffith.
 Whom I most hated living, thou hast made me,
 With thy religious truth and modesty,
 Now in his ashes honour.

(IV, ii, 69-75)

The link between "chronicle truth" and "religious truth" is "modesty". The historian requires both an intellectual scepticism, and good-will without rancour towards the subjects of his work. To build any rounded portrait of Wolsey, from the confusion of conflicting accounts, some sympathy with him as a man is necessary. The greater the power, the greater the temptations that go with it: but King and Chancellor are only human beings. Therefore we should hesitate to judge them, since we have no conception of the subtle temptations to which they are subject. So in Henry VIII, the closer we go towards the centre of power, the less clear we become about motives, and rights and wrongs. There are some questions which are not to be asked. We must not ask how much Henry's meeting with Anne affected his conscience with regard to Katherine. Where the evidence conflicts, a tactful silence is observed. This restriction makes Henry a less complete human being than he might have been: nevertheless, the dramatist does as well as circumstances allow. With

Wolsey, where similar problems arise, the dramatist does brilliantly; within the limitations of drama, Wolsey comes fully alive, but part of his motivation remains obscure. We are not given enough material to condemn Wolsey completely.

Henry VIII is not to be misinterpreted as history sentimentalised. It is no more sentimental than The Tempest. The happy ending of The Tempest is not facile. The poet's choice of a particular pattern for the play is made in full awareness of the other possible choices. Shakespeare's last plays are not mindless variations on the theme of "reconciliation". This is the general direction in which they tend to move: but they do not gloss over man's capacity for jealousy, violence and fraud. The keynote is forgiveness, not forgetfulness. A close study of Henry VIII, scene by scene, perhaps does more to reveal the coherence and quality of the play than the premature abstracting of too simple a scheme.

We can nevertheless attempt to make hints towards the definition of a pattern. The consistently subtle presentation of chronicle material shows the work of a masterly and judicious mind. Certain problems are included; others with equal artistry excluded. The dramatist is aware of all the possible contrary interpretations of events. He is not blind to the possibility that Anne Bullen might have been a scheming woman. That possibility is woven into the drama (by means of the Old Lady), but properly subordinated to the poet's chosen interpretation. The cunning incompleteness of the historical facts provided mocks "sick interpreters" (I, ii, 82): there are secrets of state that we are not allowed to penetrate. The legal machine operates with perhaps ambiguous justice.

not ever
 The justice and the truth o' th' question carries
 The due o' th' verdict with it.
 (V, i, 129-31)

Business of state is urgent and complex: who is to say at what moment the politician does evil? Buckingham and Wolsey are memorably portrayed: yet what is most remarkable is their impenetrability. In allotting praise or blame, we must be cautious. There is a vortex of uncertainty about the morality of politicians: the one certain resting-ground is the reliability of the King. At the central crisis of the play, we are privileged to be shown the very centre of government: the conscience of the King. The heart of things is sound: from this point, we make progress. All other men are whirled about by Fortune. In some sense they are treated justly when the law condemns them: for it seems that the function of the law is condemnation. Against this harsh principle of law, the play sets up a gentler principle, as we move away from raw condemnation and racking scruples. This depends upon the power of women. Katherine and Anne operate in full sympathy with each other, as is becoming "the action of good women" (II, iii, 55). As we shall see, this is one great axis of the play. The women suffer to bring about eventual joy: both are striving to be obedient: Katherine endures rejection and prison; Anne a labour which makes "almost each pang a death" (V, i, 69). In their finest moments, the men of the play also become womanish. Buckingham asks his friends to weep for him (II, i, 75); Cranmer breaks down into tears - "Look the good man weeps" (V, i, 152). Wolsey himself, the great symbol of manish ambition and pride, is utterly changed.

Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear

In all my miseries, but thou hast forced me
 Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.
 (III, ii, 428-30)

Wolsey discovers, as well as the weakness, the strength of a woman. The play is not a sloppy jelly of sentimentality. The "action" of good women is as powerful as the "action" of the law-court. At the end of the play, the appeal to the women in the audience is extremely appropriate. Just as the women in the play, the women in the audience may seem passive, but everything depends on the "construction" that they put on the play. Mercy is not weak and yielding, but a power which forms and builds.

I fear
 All the expected good we are like to hear
 For this play at this time, lies only in
 The merciful construction of good women,
 For such a one we show'd em.
 (Epilogue, 7-11)

From the very outset, we are plunged into the current of court-business. Norfolk and Buckingham have only a passing interest in the ceremonial of the Field of the Cloth of Gold: their real concern is the political significance of the event. Even as they are talking, Wolsey plots against them. Wolsey's brief entrance and departure (I, i, 115-9) is impressive dramaturgy.

The Cardinal in his passage fixeth his eye on Buckingham, and Buckingham on him, both full of disdain.
 (I, i, 114, s.d.)

This brief entrance heightens the dramatic intensity in the most economical way. Buckingham's increasing anger seems to promise that a great clash is in store. Our expectations are cheated, for within

eighty lines Buckingham is under arrest. The suddenness with which Buckingham crumples is a great dramatic stroke: we knew that Buckingham would fall; we did not know he would fall so soon, or so utterly. Immediately Buckingham knows that he has fallen, he reveals a part of his character previously latent: his Christianity and gentlemanliness. The first scene not only provides a skilful exposition for much of the main action; it also provides a model pattern in miniature of the larger pattern of the play; and this is a very Shakespearean habit.

The dense and ambiguous description of the Field of the Cloth of Gold draws us into an intriguingly complex poetic world. Unlike the later celebrations in the play - the coronation and the christening - this celebration conceals as much as it reveals. At one moment, the occasion has solidity and meaning: at the next, it seems to have overtones of fraudulence. Norfolk describes how the two kings met.

how they clung
In their embracement as they grew together,
Which had they, what four throned ones could've weigh'd
Such a compounded one?
(I, i, 9-12)

Here there is an impressive solidity in the notion "four thron'd ones", with its suggestion of squareness and reliability. The phrase "as they grew together" suggests the idea of marriage, an idea which emerges into the poetry almost at once.

Then you lost
The view of earthly glory: one might say
Till this time pomp was single, but now married
To one above itself.
(I, i, 13-6)

There is a hint of counter-movement in the phrase "earthly glory" since it half-suggests the idea that the glory of the earth passes away. The

pagan nature of the occasion becomes clearer in the description of the French, "like heathen gods" (I, i, 19). This connection of France with heathendom deserves some thought in relation to later scenes (I, iii; I, iv). One image connects the event with Christian values, but it is an odd image.

Their dwarfish pages were
As cherubins, all gilt.
(I, i, 22-3)

There is nothing truly angelic in the pages: there is less beneath the surface than is promised. There is a hint of the grotesque, as there also is in the description of the matrons sweating under the weight of their adornments (I, i, 23-6). This is a curious description: the ladies are flattered for their "natural" complexions, but this "naturalness" is a chance result of artifice. We become more aware of an artificial context to the celebration.

Now this masque
Was cried incomparable, and the ensuing night
Made it a fool and beggar.
(I, i, 26-8)

The great impact of each show within a few hours is forgotten. The two Kings seem to have acted like characters in a masque, "him in eye/ Still him in praise" (I, i, 30-1). Like masquers, the Kings are "in praise" so long as they are "in eye". Perhaps the whole event is a sham. Perhaps on the other hand it symbolizes some important ideal. Norfolk is unable to withhold praise.

All was royal;
To the disposing of it nought rebelled,
Order gave each thing view: the office did
Distinctly his full function.
(I, i, 42-5)

The shimmering possibility of pageantlike "royalty" remains in our minds as we watch the real political situation develop.

The vigorous and angry language of Buckingham wakes us up to the violent world of political everyday. Wolsey, who has so brilliantly re-created the world of fable, is acquisitive in the modern way: he is at once splendid and bourgeois.

no man's pie is freed
From his ambitious finger.
(I, i, 53-4)

As they talk of the "spider-like" Wolsey, the verse becomes urgent and compressed.

He makes up the file
Of all the gentry; for the most part such
To whom as great a charge as little honour
He meant to lay upon: and his own letter,
The honourable board of council, out,
Must fetch him in he papers.
(I, i, 75-80)

The political world of Henry VIII is a world of letters and papers and obscure manneuvres. This world stands in a curious relation to the world of heralds and pageantry. The bourgeois Wolsey has presented a "royal" pageant; now the old nobility talk about taxes, the "cost" of the peace, and "our merchants' goods at Bordeaux" (I, i, 96). The bookish Wolsey has a sufficient "sword".

I know his sword
Hath a sharp edge: it's long, and't may be said
It reaches far, and where 'twill not extend
Thither he darts it.
(I, i, 109-12)

Norfolk's words are a rueful admission of the power of the civil service machine. The skill and subtlety of Wolsey's methods at least gain his aesthetic appreciation: the expertise of the new politicians bears

comparison with the refinement of the old nobility. Wolsey's sword is "long", so that he can operate from a distance without incriminating himself. This notion of power as something which withdraws and conceals itself is important in the play. We feel it in the opening scene: on stage, we have Buckingham and Norfolk, angry and apparently formidable. We have only the briefest glimpse of Wolsey "and two secretaries with papers" (I, i, 114, s.d.). But Wolsey works with much greater speed "out of his self-drawing web" (I, i, 63), the web he has spun out of himself which draws everything towards him. He need not appear to answer Buckingham's accusations. He can operate through the King's agent, Brandon.

When Buckingham is arrested, we have the first of those crises in the play during which our judgment and sympathies are in the balance. Buckingham is self-seeking and violent. Norfolk, who knows him best, knows that he lacks temperance. Moreover, his reaction to being arrested is a little ambivalent.

It will help me nothing
To plead mine innocence, for that dye is on me
Which mak'st the whit'st part black. The will of heav'n
Be done in this as all things. I obey.
(I, i, 207-10)

It is impossible to be sure about the origin of "that dye". It is odd that Buckingham should be so convinced that "it will help . . . nothing" to plead innocence, unless he knows that his enemies (self-seeking as they themselves are) have fastened on some real evil. The intentions of those who censure may be malicious: this does not affect the validity of their accusations, when they are valid. At the same time, our knowledge of the malice that surrounds the politician makes us sympathetic towards him, as a victim.

Loe you, my lord,
The net is fall'n upon me.
(I, i, 202-3)

Against this background of evil intentions, the great politician stands out as at least capable of good intentions. The "innocence" and "integrity" which Buckingham and Wolsey assert seem to mean this basic goodwill. This does not preclude the subtle growth of evil, of which the politician may be half-conscious. While the clamour of external censure grows louder, the politician also tends to deviate from his own internal standards with the course of time. So that the politician "falls into taint" in both ways. Once the politician falls from favour, however, not only does the clamour of censure die down, but also that real internal deviation from a standard becomes more pardonable. The evil in him can no longer work such great effects. We can afford to judge him as a human being.

Buckingham's reaction to his arrest gives our ears a first sample of that specially cadenced verse so prominent in his farewell scene: in Henry VIII the verse is always peculiarly appropriate to the circumstances.

Loe you, my lord.
The net is fall'n upon me. I shall perish
Under device and practice.
. . . It will help me nothing
To plead mine innocence, for that dye is on me
Which mak'st the whit'st part black.
(I, i, 202-4; 207-9)

The gentle and alliterative "loe you, my lord" captures the speaker's passive bewilderment, and the voice lingers over the word "fall'n" as though amazed. The dying falls of "perish", "nothing", and "on me" suggest a man whose pride is broken. The particular effectiveness of the scene partly depends on the contrast between Buckingham's language,

and Brandon's, which is rough and businesslike.

BRANDON. Here is a warrant from
 The king t'attach Lord Montacute, and the bodies
 Of the duke's confessor, John de la Car,
 One Gilbert Perk, his chancellor -

BUCKINGHAM. So, so;
 These are the limbs o' th' plot: no more I hope.
 (I, i, 216-20)

Buckingham's words "The will of heav'n/ be done" (I, i, 209-10) have just been given a pious diminishing echo by Abergavenny: "As the duke said/ The will of heaven be done", (I, i, 214-5). Brandon's rough words and impersonal naming of names - "one Gilbert Perk" - cut across this pattern. But Buckingham's broken pride has a strange strength, and his music breaks through once again, softening the harsh imperative tone of Brandon: "so, so, . . . no more I hope". A sentimental pathos would move away from the harsh machinery of fact; Shakespeare's pathos confronts rough facts and transmutes them.

The opening scene not only is a drama in itself: it sets up for us a complex political context involving England, France and the Empire. Foreign policy never becomes the overt subject-matter of the play: but all the time intrigues abroad are affecting economic policy at home, and proceedings regarding the divorce and the succession. Often we only hear of these foreign intrigues by hints and guesses. But these hints and guesses add to our sense of involvement in a total political situation of multiple interlockings. What occurred when Charles the Emperor came "to whisper Wolsey" (I, i, 179) we will never know for certain.

 for I am sure the Emperor
 Paid ere he promis'd, whereby his suit was granted
 Ere it was asked.
 (I, i, 185-7)

This is only informed speculation: nevertheless, we are given a shrewd insight into the speed and silence with which the political machine operates. There is no way of knowing what the men of power are doing: so much is happening at once that even they must have the utmost difficulty in digesting the information at their disposal.

The second scene re-inforces this sense of constant business. Skilful dramaturgy allows us to gain insight into the slippery world of the court. The stage is set for one piece of business - the denunciation of Buckingham - but this is delayed by the urgent entrance of Katherine. We already know that Buckingham is doomed, so that this inset drama is no cause for annoyance or distraction. On the contrary, our knowledge that Wolsey is already in danger of going too far adds ironic resonance to the business relating to Buckingham. The brief but memorable performance of Katherine establishes her character with the utmost economy: her next appearance is at her trial. Katherine throughout the play is defined mainly in the context of her relationship with Wolsey: this is only the first of three subtle encounters, (I, ii; II, iv; III, i). We distort the play if we see Katherine as entirely right, and Wolsey as entirely wrong. That is to be over-hasty. It is easy enough to find abuses to attack, less easy to come to mature judgment on the welfare of the state.

This scene is also of great importance in establishing the character of the King. His dignified but gentle response to the Queen's unexpected entry does much to establish his kindness and good intentions.

King riseth from his state, takes her up, kisses
her, and places her by him.

(I, ii, 8, s.d.)

His action in settling the dispute shows him a little impetuous, and he does not show the intellectual power of Wolsey. Nevertheless, he rapidly reaches the heart of the matter, and his decision is made with justice and firmness. His language shows a confidence in his own power that is ultimately justified.

Things done well
And with a care exempt themselves from fear;
Things done without example, in their issue
Are to be feared.

(I, ii, 88-91)

Wilson Knight is correct to consider Henry as "not primarily a character study".² In those areas in which it is important that his character should be developed, it is developed. Henry is potentially a good king, and in the fifth act he comes to make good that potency. In those areas where the dramatist prefers to leave gaps, there are gaps. In one or two places, Shakespeare suggests faults in Henry, but on such occasions he is usually oblique; the main current of the play, a belief in the wisdom of the King, is only marginally affected. We gain a knowledge of the wisdom of the King through the successive testimony of Buckingham, Wolsey and Katherine. Then, in the final act, this wisdom is manifested. It is in keeping with the temper of the play, which shows power as something which hides and withdraws itself, that we are obliged to wait so long. If we are still not quite satisfied with the presentation of Henry, it may be for reasons akin to those for our dissatisfaction with Prospero in The Tempest. If Prospero were presented with complete fullness, perhaps we would see an evil side to his love of power. If Henry were presented with complete fullness, we might see authority as a much more ambiguous force. The poet may be allowed his chosen artefact, providing

that he is aware of the other possibilities.

Wolsey acts as a kind of shield for the King: we are allowed to see the ambiguity of power in him, but the poet chooses not to allow us to see the same in Henry. The poet decides that at some point scepticism with regard to authority must stop: but before that point is reached, there is great scope for exploration and questioning. The structure of the play allows our liberal and rationalistic impulses to be diverted into the investigation of Wolsey's methods; meanwhile our mystical and authoritarian impulses are invoked to respect the king. We would be unwise to infer that Shakespeare adopts the authoritarian point of view as his own: the artist must pay attention to the coherence of what he creates, and an emphasis on authority derived from mystery is sometimes an aesthetically satisfying resolution. Nor on the other hand should we imagine a Shakespeare so fretted with scepticism that he is unable to rest even for a moment in the acceptance of mystery. Like The Tempest, Henry VIII mocks the interpreter.

In the duels between Katherine and Wolsey, Katherine is always the accuser, even at her own trial. Wolsey's performance over the matter of the taxes prefigures what is to come. Norfolk supports Katherine with a concrete description of the state of England - how the clothiers have been obliged to dismiss from employment their workmen, who

Unfit for other life, compell'd by hunger
And lack of other means, in desperate manner
Daring th' event to the teeth, are all in uproar,
And danger serves among them.
(I, ii, 34-7)

It is an urgent situation. Significantly, the King is unaware of what is going on: this is a shrewd insight into the government of a complex

state - power lies with those who control the agencies of information.

Taxation?

Wherein? and what taxation? my lord Cardinal,
You that are blamed for it alike with us,
Know you of this taxation?

(I, ii, 37-40)

The King is impetuous: he seems to imagine that the business can be settled in a moment. Wolsey retreats before his anger.

Please you, sir,
I know but of a single part in aught
Pertains to the state, and front but in that file
Where others tell steps with me.

(I, ii, 40-3)

Shakespeare shows a full understanding of the workings of a civil service machine. Henry has won a little local victory, but we feel that Wolsey will continue to control the general strategy of the state's policy. This is because Wolsey's servants are always busy in undramatic ways, gradually influencing the course of government. Where it comes to a direct confrontation, the civil servant can afford to efface himself. Such direct confrontations are rare, and in the intervals between them, the civil servant with his superior knowledge can insensibly regain the ground conceded. The judicious half-concession to the anger of his enemies allows him to remove the main sting of their attack. On this occasion, we see Wolsey very rapidly covering up his minor defeat.

let it be nois'd
That through our intercession this revokement
And pardon comes.

(I, ii, 105-7)

Wolsey's great speech of self-defence reveals that behind the self-effacing exterior of the public servant there is a grand egotism. The capacity for long-term planning goes with a settled habit of will.

Despite himself, Wolsey is unable to conceal his real character: it gradually emerges, splendid and powerful.

And for me,
 I have no further gone in this than by
 A single voice, and that not pass'd me but
 By learned approbation of the judges: if I am
 Traduc'd by ignorant tongues, which neither know
 My faculties nor person, yet will be
 The chronicles of my doing, let me say
 'Tis but the fate of place, and the rough brake
 That virtue must go through: we must not stint
 Our necessary actions in the fear
 To cope malicious censurers, which ever
 As rav'nous fishes do a vessel follow
 Which is new trimm'd, but benefit no further
 Than vainly longing.

(I, ii, 68-81)

Assuming his persona of meekness, Wolsey begins apologetically: he is no more than "a single voice", hardly to be reckoned with without "the learned approbation of the judges". This anonymity begins to break down: we feel the inner Wolsey in the dignity of "my faculty nor person". Even at this stage, Wolsey still makes himself passive - he is the martyr, "traduced". When we come to "the fate of place", Wolsey seems to have forgotten that he is no more than "a single voice". The active strategist emerges in the vigour of the image "the rough brake/ That virtue must go through". Here "virtue" carries Latinate and Macchiavellian overtones. We have made the transition from martyred innocence to active power smashing its way through undergrowth. The audacious royal plural emerges: and finally the frank appeal to the good of the state as an end in itself - "our necessary actions". Then Wolsey launches himself (or is it the state?) into the sea of his own ambitions. His enemies shrink to mere fishes; he swells to a ship. Wolsey presents one irresistible argument: that action is necessary.

If we stand still
 In fear our motion shall be mock'd or carp'd at,
 We should take root here, where we sit,
 Or sit state-statues only.
 (I, ii, 85-8)

Wolsey has considerable sincerity: he speaks from experience. He knows the way in which business loads a man down, and is exasperated at those who demand from him an impractical scrupulosity. At the same time, he is in the wrong, as politicians almost always are. The habit of making decisions breeds an over-confidence in the accuracy of the decisions.

Over-shadowed as it is by this unexpected storm, the business with the Surveyor is at a lower key. The centre of interest shifts from Wolsey back to the King. Henry has a judicious appreciation of Buckingham's merits.

The gentleman is learn'd and a most rare speaker.
 (I, ii, 111)

However, Henry is to learn better than to trust to language, as we shall see in the course of the play. The compliment is ambiguous. This "most rare speaker" is also perhaps the grotesque villain of the Surveyor's testimony.

with one hand on his dagger,
 Another spread on's breast, mounting his eyes
 He did discharge a horrible oath.
 (I, ii, 204-6)

No doubt the Surveyor is a bribed villain: but he may be telling the truth. Nothing can be completely sure, but there have been other witnesses, and Buckingham's "My surveyor is false" (I, i, 222) seems to imply that he had confided in the surveyor. On stage, the central issue is the threat to the King's life: a reverence for the King would make any rumour of a plot against him seem true. The dramatist seems to appeal to this

suggestion of satire on the pox, which never becomes fully explicit.

"Juggle" (I, iii, 1) is frequently used in sexual contexts, as Partridge suggests.³ "A fit or two o' th' face" ostensibly refers to fashionable grimaces, but taken with "noses" - frequently affected by syphilis - there seems an unmistakeable glance at the pox (I, iii, 7; 9). This seems confirmed by the leap to "legs" and the play on horse-diseases.

They have all new legs, and lame ones; one would take it
That never saw'em pace before, the spavin,
The springhalt reign'd among'em.
(I, iii, 11-13)

"Fireworks" (I, iii, 27), as Maxwell notes,⁴ can refer to prostitutes; "old playfellows" (I, iii, 33) again seems to carry sexual innuendo.

Or pack to their old playfellows; there I take it
They may cum privilegio "oui" away
The legend of their lewdness, and be laughed at.
(I, iii, 33-5)

Taken with "lag=end", which can refer to the male organ, "oui" seems a pun on the childish "wee", urinate. By the time we come to Sands' reply, the idea of syphilis comes out almost explicitly, but not quite.

'Tis time to give 'em physic, their diseases
Are grown so catching.
(I, iii, 36-7)

It is appropriate to the mood of the play that the poet avoids the grosser possibilities of satire on the pox; just the suggestion remains. The lords naturally pass on from this satirical talk to mere bawdry of their own. There is another sexual innuendo at "a French song and a fiddle", where "fiddle" has crude connotations. Sands counters with further bawdry.

An honest country lord as I am, beaten
 A long time out of play, may bring his plain-song
 And have an hour of hearing, and by'r lady
 Held current music too.

(I, iii, 44-7)

"Hearing" carries on the suggestion of "play", since it is a pun on "earring", meaning "ploughing" with the common innuendo.

Up to this point, the language appears to have a density that would be hard to equal in Fletcher, as well as a great appropriateness to the situation. The final part of the scene, where the lords talk about Wolsey, is even more thoroughly Shakespearean.

That churchman bears a bounteous mind indeed,
 A hand as fruitful as the land that feeds us;
 His dews fall everywhere.

(I, iii, 55-7)

The quibble on "dews" works perfectly: we are given both aspects of Wolsey at once - "getting" and "bestowing" (IV, ii, 55-6). It is cleverly prepared in the previous line, with its ironic balance "a hand . . . the land". It must be remembered that Wolsey's money is from taxing the land. Sands' comment has some irony too.

He may my lord; 'has wherewithal; in him
 Sparing would show a worse sin than ill doctrine;
 Men of his way should be most liberal,
 They are set here for examples.

(I, iii, 54-62)

The moral problems raised, about what true generosity is, give this apparently slight scene serious resonances. The final phrase "They are set here for examples" carries an ominous doubleness unintended by the speaker. The close connection between generosity and good doctrine will be made apparent later in the play.

The masque scene is thoroughly Shakespearean, both in design

and execution. The dramatist's fusion of the masque recorded in Caven-
dish and Holinshed, with the meeting with Anne, is a masterly improve-
ment of history. The place of the scene in the general structure of
the play is to anticipate the later celebrations. This method of
subtle anticipation of future developments is universal in Shakespeare:
consider for instance the birth of Perdita to the imprisoned Hermoine.
The masque scene is particularly appropriate to Henry VIII. If the
play has a movement of contraction, a movement towards inner purity
and genuine integrity, it also has a movement of expansion towards
social tolerance and a generous inclusiveness. Like the human heart,
it operates both by systole and diastole. Guilford's words of welcome
convey some of that movement of expansion, which later becomes the
controlling movement of the play.

he would have all as merry
As first good company, good wine, good welcome
Can make good people.
(I, iv, 5-7)

The easy and charitable transition from "good company" and "good
wine", to the more serious idea of "good people", is suggestive of the
assumptions on which the scene works. Instead of the agonies of con-
science that underlie Act II, we have a context in which confession
can be identified with the act of joy. Penance becomes

As easy as a down-bed would afford it.
(I, iv, 18)

This situation does not necessarily represent what Shakespeare sees as
in every way best. Somewhere a boundary has to be drawn, and "lay"
thoughts, perhaps pardonable in Sands, are reprehensible in the Cardinal.
Shakespeare judiciously avoids giving Anne any large part in the scene.

Her tantalisingly brief remarks may be interpreted as either bold or shy.

You are a merry gamester
My lord Sands.
(I, iv, 45-6)

The playful talk is just in danger of becoming sinful, when explosions off-stage distract us. Shakespeare is characteristically discreet.

The disguising of the King and his companions as ambassadors from France who "speak no English" (I, iv, 65) carries just enough ambiguity to be felt, if not to affect seriously our opinion of the King. France has been presented as pagan and the home of false manners (I, i; I, iii). Wolsey's apparently very straight-forward and English household offers very sophisticated entertainment: a masque after the French manner. The King's courtesy to Anne is a little ambiguous in the circumstances.

Sweet heart,
I were unmannerly to take you out
And not to kiss you.
(I, iv, 94-6)

"Good manners" are to become a very important idea in the play. But there is a nice distinction between real and false "good manners". The courtesy that passes between Henry and Wolsey is icy.

KING. You hold a fair assembly, you do well lord.
 You are a Churchman, or I tell you Cardinal,
 I should now judge unhappily.

WOLSEY. I am glad
 Your grace is grown so pleasant.
 (I, iv, 87-90)

"You do well lord" has just a hint of doubleness - perhaps "too well", as later turns out to be the case. The rest of the King's compliment is jocularly ironic: Wolsey is quietly furious. Observing the King

with Anne, he gains his revenge.

Your grace
I fear with dancing is a little heated.
(I, iv, 99-100)

Just these suggestions of a clash of wills gives the scene tautness and resonance. They catch our minds for an instant, amid the general mirth. We are meant to be marginally uneasy, awake to other possibilities. As the King and Anne go in together, we should respond to the half-suggested irony.

sweet partner,
I must not yet forsake you.
(I, iv, 103-4)

The marriage-partner is to be less fortunate. As the scene concludes "with trumpets" and jollity, the King suggests,

let's dream
Who's best in favour.
(I, iv, 107-8)

The sinister ambiguity "in favour with me" suggests itself. This should not give anyone except the King himself the easiest of dreams.

The music of trumpets brings to an end the masque scene, which has been after all perhaps only a "dream" of royal favour. The music is scarcely over before new events rudely emphasise how insubstantial that dream is likely to be. Authority has already taken its course on Buckingham.

All's now done but the ceremony
Of bringing back the prisoner.
(II, i, 4-5)

Set against our memory of feasting, masque, dance, revelry and trumpets, the sober truth of human misfortune has a new power. In parts of the scene Shakespeare deliberately re-creates the plainness of chronicle

style: the chronicles have no need for adornment: their importance lies in their truth.

My noble father, Henry of Buckingham,
 Who first rais'd head against usurping Richard,
 Flying for succour to his servant Banister,
 Being distressed, was by that wretch betrayed
 And without trial fell.
 (II, i, 107-11)

The Wars of the Roses seem a world away from the happy, peaceful and cultured society over which Wolsey would desire to preside. But this brief excursion into the past reminds us of the permanent potential for evil in human beings: for ruthlessness, violence and treachery. Henry VIII shows us no open rebellions or unlawful murders, as do Shakespeare's other history plays. But evil is equally real. The shadow from the past has its place.

The two Gentlemen really are gentlemen: their language is not the ornamental court-language Shakespeare sometimes parodies, but a plain style infused with well-bred politeness. "O God save ye . . . I'll save you/ That labour, sir . . . Pray speak what happened . . . But pray how pass'd it?" (II, i, 1-10). Their sympathy for Buckingham makes them somewhat heated in their discussion of Wolsey: but they are remarkably judicious, and do not over-simplify the issue of Buckingham's guilt.

All these accused him strongly, which he fain
 Would have flung from him, but indeed he could not,
 And so his peers upon this evidence
 Have found him guilty of high treason.
 (II, i, 24-7)

These lines perhaps come closest to explaining the process of an originally good man's fall. He finds himself surrounded by malicious

accusers. He has a great capacity for genuine idealism, and were other things equal he could scatter his foes, because he is a higher creature than they are. This we feel in the force of the image "which he fain/ Would have flung from him". But a time comes when he finds, to his horror, that he has been false to himself. Then his superior power is gone. He remains bewildered, unable to understand the evil that has grown up in him, and still asserting his original good intentions. In asserting his "integrity" he is not exactly a liar. Yet unprejudiced judges can see that all is not well.

I had my trial,
And I must say a noble one.
(II, i, 118-9)

Even the Gentlemen, moved by the spectacle as they are, are very hesitant to declare themselves.

If the duke be guiltless,
'Tis full of woe.
(II, i, 139-40)

We would do well to be equally cautious. We should not leap to the conclusion that Buckingham is either totally innocent, or totally insincere. The crafty incompleteness of the evidence does not, however, reduce the whole business to a theatrical trick: rather, it hints at a more complex truth; and this is again and again Shakespeare's method in the play.

Hardly is the Duke off the stage before the Gentlemen turn to "new business". The speed and economy with which business is dispatched; the skilful suggestion of the organic growth of events, like a succession of waves from the same sea; are qualities of Henry VIII perhaps less than sufficiently admired. While so much else was happening, there was also

"a buzzing" of a greater matter: the divorce. At first the rumour was denied.

For when the King once heard it, out of anger
He sent command to the lord mayor straight
To stop the rumour, and allay those tongues
That durst disperse it.

(II, i, 150-3)

All this was premature, but now the great wave is ready to break on the shore of the sea of time.

But that slander, sir,
Is found a truth now.

(II, i, 153-4)

The phrasing is characteristically Shakespearean. The same matter was "a slander", and is "a truth". We should not be precipitate in judgment, but await unfolding time.

Shakespeare has a consistent strategy with regard to the presentation of the divorce. Until the trial scene we are led to believe that Wolsey is the grand manipulator of proceedings: when we then find that this is too simple an explanation of events, Wolsey becomes a much more ambiguous figure. By directing our attention to Wolsey in this way, Shakespeare draws us away from concentrating upon Henry's motivation. Shakespeare can see the danger of this: he even introduces into the play the very interpretation of events that would wreck his design.

CHAMBERLAIN. It seems the marriage with his brother's wife
Has crept too near his conscience.

SUFFOLK. (Aside.) No, his conscience
Has crept too near another lady.

NORFOLK. 'Tis so.
This is the cardinal's doing.
(II, ii, 16-19)

demonic Wolsey is a caricature of the man: but somebody must be blamed for the distresses of Katherine.

the loss of her
That like a jewel has hung twenty years
About his neck, yet never lost her lustre;
Of her that loves him with that excellence
That angels love good men with.
(II, ii, 30-4)

Katherine bears strong resemblances to Hermione: not only is she a perfect wife, she is a minister of heavenly grace. During these times of sorrow, suffering is already beginning to draw down some form of consolation from heaven: Buckingham goes to his death surrounded by "good angels"; Katherine, in enduring grief, will forward the "high and working" process of the play. The warmth of Norfolk's praise gives some promise of what is to come. A time will come when Katherine's excellent love will bear fruit.

Now good angels
Fly o'er thy royal head, and shade thy person
Under their blessed wings.
(V, i, 159-61)

For the moment, the future lies hidden: but at least the calamity brings about a kind of community in sorrow.

These news are everywhere, every tongue speaks 'em,
And every true heart weeps for't.
(II, ii, 38-9)

The court conversation at the beginning of II, ii thus gives some suggestion of a complex and continuous spiritual process.

The King's trouble is intensely private. Norfolk and Suffolk are "unmannerly" to disturb him: and this is a play in which "good manners" are very important. Their outward bad manners no doubt suggest corruption within: Norfolk and Suffolk have their own purposes in

seeking the King's ear. Henry's fury is justified.

Who's there I say? How dare you thrust yourself
 Into my private meditations?
 (II, ii, 64-5)

Sometimes power must retreat and consult with itself. Wolsey has the capacity to understand all this.

O my Wolsey,
 The quiet of my wounded conscience;
 Thou art a cure fit for a king.
 (II, ii, 73-5)

Wolsey's moral status is deeply ambiguous. Despite all we have learned from court gossip, he seems perfectly sincere in his concern for Katherine. He urges the King to allow the Queen to have scholars to defend her. Yet then we are given a glimpse of him at his blackest - in that brief interlude where Campeius asks about Doctor Pace.

Heaven's peace be with him:
 That's Christian care enough; for living murmurers
 There's places of rebuke. He was a fool,
 For he would needs be virtuous.
 (II, ii, 129-32)

The tautness and ironical tone are highly Shakespearean. The incident is in fact a distortion of history, and there would seem on the surface no reason to mention it. The purpose seems to be to present Wolsey with as much completeness as possible. The same Wolsey who can show a genuine respect for learning can show a contempt for the "learned" Doctor Pace, if he finds him an impediment. Wolsey's purposes need not be corrupt, but he is no respecter of means. Wolsey's idea of "virtue" (I, ii, 68-88) can be close to the Macchiavellian. And yet real wisdom and dutifulness grow in him, inextricably entangled with ruthlessness and pride. Paradoxically, he may be the right man to help

the King in his gravest crisis. Perhaps his very capacity for evil gives him greater depth of vision.

The uncertain movement of this scene of troubled conscience must be resolved one way or the other. The next scene resolves this tension with clear evidence of the direction in which the play will move. This lively scene between Anne Bullen and the Old Lady has always been assigned to Shakespeare. The major purpose of this scene is to establish a bond of sympathy between Katherine and Anne. This bond of sympathy is a major axis of the play. The scene is made more complex by the Old Lady's bawdy mockery of Anne. Shakespeare is aware that other interpretations of Anne as a historical figure would have been possible: but he chooses the most charitable. Lest we should feel cheated at this whitewashing of Anne, he allows expression to the "unofficial" point of view: but by making the Old Lady the mouthpiece of criticism, the unofficial point of view is discredited. The Old Lady sees lechery and ambition as the mainsprings of conduct because they are the mainsprings of her conduct.

I have been begging sixteen years at court
(Am yet a courtier beggarly) nor could
Come pat between too early and too late
For any suit of pounds.

(II, iii, 82-5)

The Old Lady grossly projects her own motivation onto Anne: Anne emerges the stronger from the encounter. Her bawdry serves a second purpose: we are emphatically reminded of Anne's sexual attractiveness and potential fecundity. The Old Lady lays as much emphasis on the birth of a child as on the sexual act itself.

if your back
 Cannot vouchsafe this burthen, tis too weak
 Ever to get a boy.

The "burthen" of the sexual partner is followed swiftly by the "burthen" of the child: and there is joy in both. For all her lewdness, the Old Lady has the redeeming quality of welcoming the full natural process. Only such a warmly imagined comic character could be forgiven for dwelling on all this at the time of Katherine's trial: but there is a kind of truth in her outspokenness, for she anticipates the time when sexual freedom and joy will be in order. So the Lord Chamberlain's prophecy has been given a proper context.

(Aside) I have perus'd her well.
 Beauty and honour are in her so mingled
 That they have caught the King: and who knows yet
 But from this lady shall proceed a gem
 To lighten all this isle?
 (II, iii, 75-9)

The Old Lady is forgiveable because spontaneous: Anne is properly thoughtful and reticent, as suits the occasion; yet the Old Lady's tactlessness opens the door on wonderful new possibilities.

With your theme I could
 O'ermount the lark.
 (II, iii, 93-4)

The Old Lady sees Anne's inevitable rise to "queenship". Anne herself is not interested in speculating on the future: she is concerned with keeping her virtue uncorrupted. She speaks with perfect sincerity and generosity of spirit. The warmth of her defence of Katherine is without reserve.

His highness having liv'd so long with her, and she
 So good a lady that no tongue could ever
 Pronounce dishonour of her (by my life

She never knew harmdoing) - O, now after
 So many courses of the sun enthroned,
 Still growing in majesty and pomp, the which
 To leave a thousandfold more bitter than
 'Tis sweet at first to acquire: after this process
 To give her the avaunt, O 'tis a pity
 Would move a monster.

(II, iii, 2-11)

The interjected "by my life/ She never knew harmdoing" has unmistakable genuineness. But Anne not only sincerely pities Katherine: she also respects the old Queen as her superior in wisdom and dignity. The majesty of Katherine is affirmed in terms of the stability of nature: "so many courses of the sun enthroned". We can hardly resist the suggestion of seeing Katherine to Anne as mother to daughter: exactly the same kind of axis as operates in The Winter's Tale. Anne sees herself as justified only by not presuming: she has affinities with Perdita.

I swear 'tis better to be lowly born
 And range with humble livers in content,
 Than to be perk'd up in a glist'ring grief
 And wear a golden sorrow.

(II, iii, 19-22)

In this state of humility, she is fit to receive the majesty and grace that will be poured upon her. She is united with Katherine in the bond of good intentions.

ANNE. Our mistress' sorrows we were pitying.

CHAMBERLAIN. It was a gentle business, and becoming
 The action of good women; there is hope
 All will be well.

(II, iii, 53-6)

The "action of good women" will eventually prove more powerful than the harsh action of the law-courts. The scenes at the end of Act II are one end of an arc of which Act IV is the other: here we see the

promise, there the fulfillment, of the power of women. The final Act re-capitulates all this, beginning with Anne in labour, ending with the christening. It is largely through this optimistic vision of woman that Shakespeare shades history into myth. He avoids any suggestion of rivalry between Katherine and Anne. Anne is far too delicate to gloat over her good fortune.

Would I had no being
If this salute my blood a jot: it faints me
To think what follows.
The queen is comfortless, and we forgetful
In our long absence: pray do not deliver
What here y^o have heard to her.
(II, iii, 102-7)

The delicate suggestion of the older woman and the younger mutually drawing strength from each other comes close to the heart of the play.

Anne's acceptance of her good fortune is humble: she stresses her obedience.

I do not know
What kind of my obedience I should tender . . .
Vouchsafe to speak my thanks and my obedience . . .
(II, iii, 65-6; 71)

Katherine's acceptance of bad fortune is exactly parallel.

Sir call to mind
That I have been your wife in this obedience
Upward of twenty years.
(II, iv, 32-4)

Some inexplicable necessity drives events forward: only the passive virtues of patience and obedience can subdue history to a happy issue. Katherine's "trial" is only the beginning of her trials: she finds patience difficult to achieve, and only at the very end is she worthy of being crowned with garlands. She always has the goal in mind: her struggles to achieve it make her the more human. Her statement of

self-defence (II, iv, 11-54), recalling Hermione's, is eloquent and dignified: but she gradually gives way to anger as she faces Wolsey.

Sir,
I am about to weep; but thinking that
We are a queen (or long have dream'd so) certain
The daughter of a king, my drops of tears
I'll turn to sparks of fire.
(II, iv, 67-71)

The fine quality of Katherine's anger wins our sympathy: but it shows her less than perfect. She must achieve a more perfect resignation. She sweeps out of the court in fury.

They vex me past my patience.
(II, iv, 128)

Despite this display of warm anger, Katherine essentially is as the King describes her in his generous eulogy following her departure. He knows the Queen's "rare qualities".

sweet gentleness,
Thy meekness saintlike, wifelike government,
Obeying in commanding, and thy parts
Sovereign and pious else.
(II, iv, 135-8)

These are Katherine's essential qualities, which she will display increasingly. She is indeed "the queen of earthly queens" (II, iv, 139). This pre-eminent quality of Katherine should be observed. Shakespeare has no intention of distracting us from her stature: from this time forward, Anne has no speaking part. And whereas Anne advances to be an earthly queen, Katherine advances to a grander coronation. Katherine becomes in a new sense the queen of merely "earthly queens". Anne's coronation and her progress to motherhood are the crucial events of the last two acts: but Anne herself is almost the passive recipient of the grace won for her by Katherine. This is not the complete truth, since

Anne herself must suffer the pains of labour, and thus advance in stature: but all this takes place offstage and is no more than a miniature recapitulation. Katherine retains senior stature.

The dramatist is obliged to find some expedient to deflect Katherine's anger from the King. Henry must not be represented as wicked or foolish. Consequently Katherine's main anger is directed against Wolsey. This results in a subtle situation, since apparently Katherine is at least partly wrong in her condemnation of Wolsey. She is right in sensing Wolsey's capacity for hypocrisy, but apparently wrong to believe that he is hypocritical in this situation. The dramatist's intention is partly to suggest the difficulty of coming to true judgment. Wolsey is not exactly her friend, but his real role remains elusive.

You charge me
That I have blown this coal: I do deny it;
The King is present: if it be known to him
That I gainsay my deed, how may he wound
And worthily, my falsehood, yea as much
As you have done my truth.
(II, iv, 91-6)

When Wolsey speaks of "my truth" it is sometimes not quite the same thing as "truth". He never lays himself open.

your words
(Domestics to you) serve your will as't please
Yourself pronounced their office.
(II, iv, 111-3)

Wolsey's language is in itself a civil service machine. Even when he tells the truth, he has evolved a procedure of perpetual regress, so that he lies hidden far behind his words. "Unthink your speaking" is his advice to the precepitate Queen (II, iv, 102). Ironically Wolsey is sometimes right: as the King says, Wolsey has many enemies

that know not
 Why they are so, but like to village curs
 Bark when their fellows do.
 (II, iv, 156-8)

Nevertheless, these enemies instinctively feel uneasy about the too-perfect system of Wolsey's defences. So do we at the moment when Wolsey appeals to the King, to answer

whether ever I
 Did broach this business to your highness, or
 Laid any scruple in your way which might
 Induce you to the question on't; or ever
 Have to you, but with thanks to God for such
 A royal lady, spake one the least word that might
 Be to the prejudice of her present state
 Or touch of her good person.
 (II, iv, 147-53)

Anyone with the facility to erect such an elaborate system of defences, we instinctively feel, must have something to hide. The King exonerates Wolsey, however, and we are left with a bewildering recess.

The quarrel between Katherine and Wolsey leaves a vortex of uneasiness: at this moment the King must come forward. The King's speech of self-defence is weighty and obviously sincere. He gives us a glimpse of the gradual generation of the great event from the small.

Now what mov'd me to it,
 I will be bold with time and your attention:
 Then mark th' inducement: thus it came: give heed to it.
 (II, iv, 165-7)

With scrupulous exactness, the King attempts to define the moment of his first anxieties about the marriage; it was at the time when the Bishop of Bayonne asked for a respite to consider the legitimacy of the King's daughter.

i'th progress o'th' business,
 Ere a determinate resolution, he
 (I mean the bishop) did require a respite,

Wherein he might the king his lord advertise
 Whether our daughter was legitimate
 Respecting this our marriage with the dowager,
 Sometimes our brother's wife.
 (II, iv, 173-9)

The verse suggests the slow, honest mind of the King, trapped in legal entanglements and unable to break free. "Th' inducement" gradually fashioned itself out of nothing, and the King was obliged to accept an inevitable historical process.

This respite shook
 The bosom of my conscience, enter'd me,
 Yea, with a spitting power, and made to tremble
 The region of my breast, which forc'd such way
 That many maz'd considerings did throng
 And press'd in with this caution.
 (II, iv, 179-84)

The verbs are powerful and urgent: "shook", "enter'd", "spitting", "made to tremble", "throng", and "press'd in". We feel the King's great sense of responsibility, his unwillingness to act unless actively compelled. But some necessity precipitates him forward: he has reached a point of life at which everything seems dead, and against his will he must leap into an unknown. This state of spiritual deadness is symbolised by the death of his children.

for her male issue
 Or died where they were made, or shortly after
 This world had air'd them.
 (II, iv, 189-91)

The failure of issue is the crucial fact precipitating the divorce. Dubious as the morality of the divorce proceedings may seem, for some reason heaven demands this breakthrough from the dead old cycle, where the Queen's womb is no better than a "grave" (II, iv, 189). Perhaps the King himself stands under "the law" until he breaks free into a

new realm of grace: just as Buckingham, Wolsey and Katherine submit to the law.

This was a judgment on me.
(II, iv, 192)

Before he can reach the new realm, the King must sacrifice his secure conscience.

thus hulling in
The wild sea of my conscience, I did steer
Towards this remedy, whereupon we are
Now gathered here together.
(II, iv, 197-200)

Like Pericles, the King must experience a deep sense of loss, and be set adrift on a wild sea. Like Pericles, at the end of his voyage, he gains a child. His honest and painful speech comes at a crux of the play where a statement of direction is most needed. It anticipates what is to come. The King is not proved wanting at the time of deepest distress, when only he can resolve our doubts.

CHAPTER THREE

Great as is the crisis of the divorce, further calamity awaits in the third act. Nevertheless, there are strong indications of the eventual outcome. The lute-song at the opening of Act III suggests that battle of art against nature which is so common a concern of the last plays. Orpheus exemplifies the power of art over nature.

To his music, plants and flowers
Ever sprung, as sun and showers
There had made a lasting spring.
(III, i, 6-8)

The effect of art is to encourage the natural growth of "plants and flowers". The troubles of life - which in other circumstances might be shipwrecking tempests - are reduced to "showers". Showers are a necessary part of spring. The idea suggests the transmutation of the storm in King Lear to the "sunshine and rain at once" of Cordelia (Lear, IV, iii, 17). Art evades the temporal and creates a "lasting", ideal world. "Even the billows of the sea" (III, i, 10) are transmuted: the prospects for the King, lost in "the wild sea" of his conscience (II, iv, 198), are good. But the characteristic equi-pose of Shakespeare is maintained: perhaps the billows only temporarily "lay by".

In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing die.
(III, i, 12-4)

Does the trouble really die, or does it seem to have died only so long as the music lasts? The striking phrase "killing care" acknowledges the fearful reality of pain: perhaps pain only "falls asleep", to wake when the music is over. The song is economical and subtle.

It directs our response to the play: we must keep all possibilities in mind, the pain that kills as well as the art that transmutes.

When the poet acknowledges the possible arbitrariness of his chosen interpretation of events, the play gains a new dimension of solidity. At the very crisis of the play, the divorce, we are reminded that art is only art. The King's decision to proceed with the divorce was made behind closed doors. At that time he invited the ministrations of Wolsey. Wolsey is deeply wise but of ambiguous moral standing, perhaps deeply wise because of ambiguous moral standing. Implicitly, the ambiguity of the event is recognised. Shakespeare suggests that it is only by his own intervention (as Orpheus to the unresponsive material of chronicle) that a particular pattern is set up. The artist emphasises his own role: when for instance the King turns on the conspirators, the contrary possibilities are made clear. By all the signs, it should be an ugly situation: the King is furious: "Thou hast a cruel nature and a bloody" (V, ii, 162). But the artist takes pleasure in deliberately emphasising that he has chosen something different: a reduction of the event to triviality: "we trifle time away" (V, ii, 212). Shakespeare is self-critical about the value of the transmutation of sorrow effected by the play. At the same time, the acknowledgment that the play is an artifice is only lightly touched upon: the total effect is enlivened and made more complex, without the "official" progress of the play being undermined.

The scene between Katherine and the Cardinals is attributed by Spedding to Fletcher. Yet it carries on the situation suggested in the trial scene, and does so with considerable subtlety. Wolsey and

Katherine have different notions of truth: neither perhaps is altogether right.

WOLSEY. May it please you, noble madam, to withdraw
Into your private chamber; we shall give you
The full cause of our coming.

KATHERINE. Speak it here.
There's nothing I have done yet o' my conscience
Deserves a corner.

(III. i. 27-31)

Katherine wins our sympathy: her anger is very human; yet Wolsey also makes his point. This is no time to give way to fruitless displays of anger: a quiet response may be a fuller demonstration of inward strength. "Withdrawal" has its advantages: and this is why Katherine accepts the private counsel of the Cardinals at the end of the scene. They gradually prevail over her. She becomes more and more exasperated, but then sees the futility of exasperation. "Truth loves open dealing" she proclaims (III, i, 39). But Wolsey can see truth from a different point of view: as the result of careful, quiet thought and study. So he begins to speak in Latin. Katherine replies with scorn.

I am not such a truant since my coming
As not to know the language I have liv'd in.
(III. i. 43-4)

The phrase "the language I have liv'd in" should have significant resonances: we should remember Buckingham, that "most rare speaker"; and Wolsey, whose words are "domestics" to him. Perhaps neither genuinely "knew" the language that they "liv'd in": and perhaps Katherine is also over-confident. Her words make Wolsey retreat still further.

Noble lady,
I am sorry my integrity should breed

(And service to his majesty and you)
 So deep suspicion where all faith was meant.
 (III, i, 50-3)

"My integrity" too clearly admits the speaker's egotism, and must be circumscribed with the defensive qualification "and service to his majesty and you". The parenthetical construction; which leaves "breed" hanging without an object, makes us uneasy. Gradually, by a negative process of definition, Wolsey explains the purpose of the visit. He is assisted by Campeius, who tells Katherine that Wolsey acts

Forgetting (like a good man) your late censure
 Both of his truth and him.
 (III, i, 64-5)

Charity seems to be a calculated manoeuvre: we are reminded how little Wolsey really "forgets" an insult.

Katherine is confused by the Cardinals, and begins to see that there is no easy solution.

But how to make ye suddenly an answer
 In such a point of weight, so near mine honour
 (More near my life I feel) with my weak wit,
 And to such men of gravity and learning,
 In truth I know not.
 (III, i, 70-4)

Katherine begins to speak with almost the circumspection of Wolsey. "In truth" carries both the weak and the strong sense: it is perhaps not easy to make an answer "in truth". Katherine has changed her tactics from her earlier defiance, to a request for "time and counsel" (III, i, 79). She gives way to bewildered sorrow.

Nay forsooth, my friends,
 They that must weigh out my afflictions,
 They that my trust must grow to, live not here;
 They are (as all my other comforts) far hence
 In mine own country, lords.
 (III, i, 87-91)

The powerful phrase "they that my trust must grow to", and the daring rhythmic stress on "far hence", are marks of Shakespeare. Much more Shakespearean is the doubleness of suggestion. Ostensibly Katherine refers to her native Germany. But her words are prophetic of her death. She must "grow" to be worthy of the company of the angels; her "own country" is Heaven. This spiritual growth depends partly on the development of a new gentleness.

Put your main cause into the king's protection,
 He's loving and most gracious. . . .
 For if the trial of the law o'ertake ye,
 You'll part away disgrac'd.
 (III, i, 93-7)

Campeius seems to play on the theological notions, "grace" and "law". So perhaps he really does offer "Christian counsel" (III, i, 99). By the "law", according to Pauline theology, we are all dead: but by "grace" we live. So perhaps there is a hint of this idea in the play. We cannot hope to be saved by an appeal to the law, because by the law we have all transgressed.

The law I bear no malice for my death,
 'T has done upon the premisses but justice.
 (II, i, 62-3)

Katherine has not yet reached that kind of serenity. Her violent anger is the more dramatic after her brief bewildered pause. The Cardinals shrink into silence: she feels she is talking to empty robes -

If ye be anything but churchmen's habits.
 (III, i, 117)

For a brief while, Katherine is sustained by her own momentum.

Have I with all my full affections
 Still met the King? lov'd him next heaven? obey'd him?
 Been (out of fondness) superstitious to him?
 (III, i, 129-31)

The rhythms have an urgency which suggests Shakespeare. This fit of anger cannot be sustained, and soon Katherine subsides into tears.

Shipwreck'd upon a kingdom where no pity,
 No friends, no hope, no kindred wait for me,
 Almost no grave allow'd me: like the lily
 That once was mistress of the field and flourished,
 I'll hang my head and perish.
 (III, i, 149-53)

The notions of shipwreck and death without burial are significant in Pericles and The Tempest: however there is no need to suggest thematic parallels; the poetry stands on its own.

Wolsey offers further comfort: "our ends are honest", he affirms, but makes no reference to means (III, i, 154). He has no cause to wrong the Queen.

The way of our profession is against it.
 (III, i, 157)

We may have our doubts about Wolsey's "profession", but he offers the best available comfort. His advice has considerable irony if we consider Wolsey's own fall in the next scene.

The hearts of princes kiss obedience
 So much they love it; but to stubborn spirits
 They swell and grow as terrible as storms.
 I know you have a gentle, noble temper
 A soul as even as a calm: pray think us
 Those we profess, peacemakers, friends and servants.
 (III, i, 162-7)

There will be one more storm on the political sea: then the gentle power of women will bring calm. The simplicity of the image "a soul as even as a calm" is moving. The role of Wolsey cannot easily be guessed: yet he partly is an agent of reconciliation; peacemaker, friend and servant. It is only charity to recognise this. Wolsey combines the roles of villain, peacemaker, and victim. He does good

in as much as he helps Katherine to understand herself.

pray forgive me;
 If I have used myself unmannerly,
 You know I am a woman, lacking wit
 To make a seemly answer to such persons.
 (III, i, 175-8)

The idea of "good manners" is pervasive in Henry VIII. By decorous behaviour, the violence of human nature is subdued. We shall find the motif recur. Displays of bad manners occur when Buckingham momentarily speaks in choler at his trial (II, i, 34), when Norfolk and Suffolk intrude upon the King (II, ii), when Katherine loses her temper (III, i), when the courtiers mock the fallen Wolsey (III, ii), when the Messenger is discourteous (IV, ii), and when the conspirators refuse Cranmer entry (V, ii). These breaches of the code of courtesy are serious matters. Since the play does not deal with armed rebellion, these apparently minor events must be given their proper symbolic weight. The scene between Katherine and the Cardinals has a very important place in Katherine's spiritual development from the trial scene to the scene of her vision. It also opens up the possibility for a more sympathetic portrait of Wolsey: circumstances oblige Katherine to adjust her opinion of the Cardinal, and we must adjust ours. To sympathise is not necessarily entirely to condone.

The great scene which presents the fall of Wolsey has been divided arbitrarily at line 203.¹ The earlier part of the scene has been assigned to Shakespeare; the later to Fletcher. A close study of the scene makes this theory seem oddly improbable. First of all even those who allege collaboration must admit the excellent dramaturgy of the scene. We begin with urgent gossip among the lords; then

Wolsey comes in; then we have the great confrontation between Wolsey and the King; the King demonstrates his power and goes out, leaving Wolsey alone; the lords return and an angry quarrel develops; then Wolsey is left alone a second time; lastly, Cromwell comes to offer sympathy. The power of the structure largely depends on the fact that Wolsey is twice deserted: the most painful moments he endures are not when he suffers accusation and insult, but when he is left alone. When the lords return to insult him, it is almost a relief and distraction from the loneliness he feels when the King deserts him. At least they still think him worth insulting. When the lords go out, the loneliness seems much worse for this temporary relief. This is a fitting time for the entry of Cromwell.

The gathering of the lords to express their common hate for Wolsey tends to draw our sympathy to the Cardinal's side. The violent words "to be revenged" (III, ii, 9) surprise us: for we have become used to more subtle manifestations of power than this bloody directness. We seem in the world of the Wars of the Roses. This business is urgent: but Shakespeare has time to tell us more news - that the King has already married Anne. The dramatist allows himself a slight sacrifice of tempo, in order to strengthen the structure of the play. Suffolk prophesies the birth of Elizabeth.

I persuade me from her
Will fall some blessing to this land, which shall
In it be memoriz'd.

(III, ii, 50-2)

This strengthens the earlier prophesy of the Lord Chamberlain (II, iii, 77-9). The dramatist is very obviously aware of the direction in

which he is moving. The news of the coronation is still "to some ears unrecounted" (III, ii, 48). Events mysteriously are born and come to maturity. The lords also briefly mention Cranmer, whose rise might have been expected ever since II, iv, 236. All this is done with extreme brevity, so that the main business is hardly interrupted. The entry of Wolsey draws us back to this.

Wolsey enters deep in thought: we can sense from his agitated language that he is losing control of events. He has become so entangled in his own plots that the lords can relax and watch him squirm.

My lord, we have
 Stood here observing him. Some strange commotion
 Is in his brain; he bites his lip, and starts,
 Stops on the sudden, looks unto the ground,
 Then lays his finger on his temple; straight
 Springs out into fast gait, then stops again,
 Strikes his breast hard, and anon he casts
 His eye against the moon.

(III, ii, 111-8)

Wolsey becomes the actor, the King and lords the audience. It is as though Wolsey is in a different world from them, a much less real world, where he only has an hour to act out his tragedy. He must convey his mental state by a series of urgent, almost compulsive, gestures. When the King greets the Cardinal with a scathing ironical attack, it almost seems unfair. The King is so thoroughly in command, Wolsey so unprepared and defenceless, that our sympathies go out to the Cardinal.

Wolsey is at bay: but his finest qualities emerge: his passionate language allows us a glimpse of that interior fire that sustains him. The Macchiavel is the selfless lover of the King, the willing martyr for the state. The ideas that flash upon him in his confrontation with the King he will later develop and see more fully.

mine own ends
 Have been mine so, that evermore they pointed
 To the good of your most sacred person, and
 The profit of the state.
 (III, ii, 171-4)

The grand yearning of that verb "pointed" suggests the tangle of egotism and genuine idealism that later finds such poignant expression:

I have touch'd the highest point of all my greatness.
 (III, ii, 223)

The ideal is beyond his grasp: his work points towards it; at the climax of his life he touches it. But then winter comes.

For your great graces
 Heap'd upon me (poor undeserver) I
 Can nothing render but allegiant thanks,
 My prayers to heaven for you, my loyalty,
 Which ever has and ever shall be growing,
 Till death, that winter, kill it.
 (III, ii, 174-9)

The seasons provide a simple and suitable analogy to human life.

Wolsey returns to this idea later in the scene.

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost.
 (III, ii, 355)

Wolsey protests that he will stand by the King

As doth a rock against the chiding flood,
 Should the approach of this wild river break.
 (III, ii, 197-8)

The image of the opposing torrent will recur. Wolsey will see himself at the mercy "of a rude stream that must forever hide me" (III, ii, 364). Wolsey is of a piece throughout the scene: in the last moments of his pride, he anticipates his subsequent emotions.

The first of Wolsey's soliloquys is the less resigned. "Is there no way to cure this?" (III, ii, 216) he asks himself, as he fumbles with the packages. The confusion of the speech is highly

dramatic: one moment everything seems over, the next a hope suggests itself. The wonderfully sudden calamity is caught in the imagery.

He parted frowning from me, as if ruin
Leap'd from his eyes.

(III, ii, 205-6)

But it is only human nature to attempt to avoid the inevitable. For a moment we watch Wolsey attempting to recover himself, and the enactment of these helpless efforts makes us more sympathetic to him when he resigns himself at last. "Nay then, farewell" (III, ii, 322).

I shall fall
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
And no man see me more.

(III, ii, 255-7)

The tact and lack of superfluity in these lines are what make them Shakespearean. The words are grave and exact: "And no man see me more". The strength of the scene is partly in the appropriateness of the proportions: we do not lose ourselves in sentimentality, but are constantly recalled to the real situation. When Wolsey has spoken these lines, Norfolk, Suffolk and the other lords enter to impress us with harsh fact. No false glamour softens the situation.

The lords surround Wolsey to taunt him. Wolsey defends himself with dignity.

Follow your envious courses, men of malice.
(III, ii, 243)

Those words, "envy" and "malice", recur with great frequency in the play, from the Buckingham scenes to the Cranmer scenes. Wolsey's concern with the King's seal (III, ii, 245-50) parallels the later business with the King's ring. And as with the later business, a very serious court quarrel can be seen as a breach of good manners.

if I blush,
It is to see a nobleman want manners.
(III, ii, 307-8)

The tight construction of the play is felt in the introduction of Surrey, Buckingham's son-in-law. We must still thresh over the rights and wrongs of that old quarrel.

How innocent I was
From any private malice in his end,
His noble jury, and foul cause can witness.
(III, ii, 267-9)

No part of the play's structure is superfluous. Every incident is needed. Shakespeare constantly asks us to look both backward and forward, and draw the play into a single experience. If the play were structureless and jerrybuilt, the dramatist would not do this.

The vigorous language of the quarrel makes unnecessary any theory of collaboration.

Within these forty hours Surrey durst better
Have burnt that tongue than said so. . . .
. . . I'll startle you
Worse than the sacring bell, when the brown wench
Lay kissing in your arms, lord cardinal.
(III, ii, 253-4; 294-6)

What is even more Shakespearean is the dramatic suddenness with which the quarrel dies down. The Lord Chamberlain intervenes.

O my lord,
Press not a falling man too far.
(III, ii, 332-3)

This clearly anticipates Cromwell's intervention in the later quarrel.

'tis a cruelty
To load a falling man.
(V, ii, 110-11)

Following this surprising display of charity, the lords snarl briefly and depart. It is as though we have broken through their angry bluster,

and reached a plateau of strength in calm.

Wolsey's soliloquy at the departure of the nobles is very different from his previous agitated soliloquy. Now he knows that all hope is gone, he becomes more expansive.

This is the state of man: today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope; tomorrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls as I do.

(III, ii, 352-8)

The ironic conclusion "and then he falls as I do", in its brief simplicity, mocks the care lavished on the image. Wolsey can stand back and gain perspective: once he does so, his essential nobility of soul becomes apparent. The relaxation of his verse has been earned. But the relaxation must not lapse into a false glamorisation of the situation: and an urgent current of events presses upon Wolsey.

my high-blown pride
At length broke under me, and now has left me
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.

(III, ii, 361-4)

In the theatrical presentation of this part of the scene, we should feel both the mood of Indian summer - "I feel my heart new open'd" (III, ii, 366) - and also the inexorable and painful progress of history.

This is the balance that must be preserved in the scene with Cromwell. Wolsey's magnificent emergence into heroic stature

- these shoulders,
These ruin'd pillars -
(III, ii, 381-2)

must not distract us from the utter finality of the news that Cromwell

brings. Blow upon blow falls upon the Cardinal. The whole machine of state is doing very well without him. The worst news to take is of the happiness of others: of More, Cranmer and Anne. "That's somewhat sudden". "That's news indeed" (III, ii, 394; 402). These remarks are enough to suggest an intense spiritual struggle. It is a genuine confrontation with the facts. In a strange way, Wolsey's acceptance of his fall allows him a new ownership of his own past. He becomes again the man who "sounded all the depths and shoals of honour" (III, ii, 436). Before Cromwell, he can again assume the pastoral role.

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition.
(III, ii, 440)

But the tone of authority gives way to the acknowledgment of helplessness - "naked to mine enemies" (III, ii, 457). The new strength and the new humility are interdependent: Wolsey is neither completely broken nor smug. He can properly speak, from experience and awareness, in a grave and sententious style.

Love thyself last, cherish those hearts that hate thee;
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
(III, ii, 443-4)

The bond of disinterested friendship between Wolsey and Cromwell is something intensely private that no-one else will notice. Perhaps we must begin with such private friendships before moving out towards a broader social vision. The worth of these bonds is established by their strength in time of distress. By a process of loss and contraction, private sources of strength are newly confirmed, so that the movement of joy and expansion naturally follows.

The structure of the play may seem open to criticism. Why

should the story of Wolsey be given such extended treatment, when the central action of the play is the divorce? Does not the fall of Wolsey form a rival and distracting focus of attention? This is not what happens. The fall of Wolsey is a crucial event in the emotional progress of the play from the mutual recriminations of the trial scene to the calm of the fourth act. The obliteration of aggressive motivation (anticipated in the transformation of Buckingham) opens the way for the coming of women into Queenship. Wolsey renounces his essential manish quality, ambition (III, ii, 440), and for once "plays the woman" (III, ii, 430). Wolsey pays the price of death for the emotional progress he makes. The death of Wolsey is necessary in other ways. We retain a sense that there was a strand of evil in the divorce proceedings: a victim must emerge, in order that the political system may be purged. In order that Anne may rise, Wolsey must fall: "This was the weight that pulled me down" (III, ii, 407). The fall of Wolsey is crucial to the moral progress of the King.

O Cromwell,
The King has gone beyond me.
(III, ii, 407-8)

At a certain stage the King needs Wolsey (II, ii; II, iv): he must be initiated into some deep and ambiguous knowledge. But the dark phase is temporary: the King emerges into confirmed and unambiguous strength. He has "gone beyond" the crisis.

It is natural that the next scene should show us the two gentlemen hurrying to watch the coronation procession. The conversation among the gentlemen is a very important turning-point in the structure of the play - as is clearly underlined by the dramatist.

Only a place-name reminds us of him, and then not even that. New affairs at court are more interesting than talk of the dead. The gentlemen sketch out for us the likely pattern of future events. They predict not only Gardiner's struggle against Cranmer, but also Cromwell's alliance with Cranmer. We gain a sense of the gradual evolution of events: "yet there is no great breach" (IV, i, 106). The coronation scene suggests with great economy the whole pattern of the previous and subsequent scenes: it is a vantage-point from which to look backwards and forwards.

Simultaneously we participate in a great celebration. It is a time of "general" joy.

the citizens
I am sure have shown at full their royal minds.
(IV, i, 7-8)

This is a reversal of the situation where the King demonstrates his royalty by withdrawal (II, ii). The crowd demonstrates a "royalty" of its own by bursting onto the streets. The lower possibilities of human nature, suggested by the animal behaviour of the crowd, are seen in a humorous and tolerant way. They are a basis on which to build. Similarly, the physical beauty of Anne is a basis from which the Gentlemen infer the rightness of the marriage.

Sir, as I have a soul, she is an angel;
Our King has all the Indies in his arms,
And more and richer, when he strains that lady;
I cannot blame his conscience.
(IV, i, 44-7)

The Gentleman is stirred to this by Anne's sweet face. "She is an angel" crosses over the bounds of conventional compliment, and becomes an exoneration of the King. The Gentleman's thinking is appropriate

to the situation. Life cannot be a constant re-examination of conscience: there must be times of release. Even on these occasions, levity must be kept within bounds.

2 GENT. These are stars indeed.

1 GENT. And sometimes falling ones.

2 GENT. No more of that.
 (IV, i, 54-5)

(IV, i, 54-5)

The restraint of this is highly Shakespearean. The First Gentleman's bawdy quibble is doubly inappropriate, since the word "falling" reminds us of the general political context, and thus carries resonances too serious. The Second Gentleman is doubly right to restrain his friend.

The coronation procession which passes over the stage to the sound of trumpets is the visual climax of the scene. This the last appearance of Anne, and it should be impressive. But the scene also has a poetic climax in the descriptions of the crowd. The Third Gentleman emerges sweating from the crowd.

where a finger
 Could not be wedg'd in more: I am stifled
 With the mere rankness of their joy.
 (IV, i, 57-9)

(IV, i, 57-9)

The sweat, the thrust of body against body, and the mad joy, give the crowd a wonderful sexual vigour. Queen Anne shares in this spirit of sexual joy: but at the same time she is very separate from the crowd. "The rich stream" of lords and ladies brought Anne to a prepared place and then "fell off/ A distance from her" (IV, i, 62-5). Anne is left alone

In a rich chair of state, opposing freely

The beauty of her person to the people.
(IV, i, 67-8)

She participates in the people's joy, but is separate from them in royal dignity. Although fresh and young, Anne is also properly demure. Shakespeare suggests both aspects of Anne. But the crowd too has a more complex existence than we are at first expecting.

. . . such a noise arose
As the shrouds make at sea in a stiff tempest,
As loud and to as many tunes.
(IV, i, 71-3)

The splendid image of the ship running before the wind gives the crowd a true royalty of its own: and what at first seems a hubbub may be a great polyphony. At the same time the crowd has a grotesque quality.

Hats, cloaks
(Doublets, I think) flew up, and had their faces
Been loose, this day they had been lost. Such joy
In never saw before. Great-bellied women
That had not half a week to go, like rams
In the old time of war, would shake the press
And make it reel before 'em.
(IV, ii, 73-9)

The extravagant conceit about "their faces" gives us some sense of the craziness of the situation. The even more extravagant comparison of pregnant women with battering-rams has a complex effect: the power for violence of the crowd strikes us. This aspect of the crowd becomes more obvious in later descriptions (V, iii), and gives a curious resonance to the celebration of peace and prosperity. The intrinsic potential of the crowd is suggested as well as its immediate activity. But then we see the crowd from yet a different viewpoint.

No man living
Could say 'This is my wife' here, all were woven

So strangely in one piece.
(IV, i, 80-1)

Private concerns are left behind in this animal convergence: but the total effect, viewed from a distance, is like a richly-patterned cloth, something of rare quality.

The behaviour of the Queen, "modest" and "saintlike" (IV, i, 82; 83), is more impressive against the background of the wildly enthusiastic crowd. The holy symbolism of the ceremony is described: enduring, emblematic and cool.

She had all the royal makings of a Queen,
As holy oil, Edward Confessor's crown,
The rod, and bird of peace and all such emblems
Laid nobly on her; which perform'd, the choir
With all the choicest music of the kingdom
Together sang 'Te Deum'.
(IV, i, 87-92)

The heavy stresses and slow movement of "With all the choicest music of the kingdom" gives us the sense of relief and uplift when we come to "together". This spiritual music forms a striking development of the "many tunes" of the crowd. That good impulse of the crowd is here given sanctity and direction. Following this culminating moment of the ceremony, the lords and ladies depart for "the feast" (IV, i, 94). Solemnity and jollity each have their proper place. The treatment of the coronation has Shakespeare's characteristic complexity.

The general movement of the play towards a joyful resolution is established in the coronation scene: but the next scene gives a new spiritual dimension to this movement. It is at once a highly retrospective scene, and a scene in which great emotional progress is made. The strands of the story are gathered together by the ingenious

dramatic contrivance of having Katherine pass her final, more charitable, judgment on Wolsey. Katherine's spiritual progress depends partly on her more generous interpretation of history. The spiritual coronation of Katherine forms a natural complement to the coronation of the previous scene. Katherine emerges in all her strength: like Hermione, she is re-established in glory. But there is no suggestion of antagonism or rivalry between Katherine and Anne. Each fulfils her natural role: Katherine as the older woman (who has been "so many courses of the sun enthroned" (II, iii, 6) as Anne herself says) has the grander destiny. But the stream of grace seems to flow through Katherine to Anne. Katherine is specially made to appear in the role of mother, a role in which self-sacrifice and altruism are natural.

I have commended to his goodness
The model of our chaste loves, his young daughter
(The dews of heaven fall thick in blessings on her).
(IV, ii, 131-3)

Then she appeals for her waiting-women and her menservants (IV, ii, 138-58), that the King should not leave them unconsidered. The artistic purpose of all this is to establish Katherine as the matriarch of her household, concerned for others to the point of excluding self-concern. As we are not shown Queen Katherine's daughter (Mary), it is Anne who effectively fills the role of daughter to Katherine. A new development will be the advance to motherhood of Anne herself. Anne will begin to fulfil Katherine's role, and begin upon the road to maturity. This maturity seems to depend on self-sacrifice: and self-sacrifice is made meaningful by the setting up of spiritual goals.

My legs like loaden branches bow to th' earth,

Willing to leave their burthen.
(IV, ii, 2-3)

Wolsey too was at last weighted down by his different kind of burden, "a load would sink a navy" (III, ii, 384). The political burden eventually exhausts the statesman; the burden of motherhood exhausts the Queen. The new Queen is still young enough to take her burden merrily.

Have you limbs
To bear that load of title?
(II, iii, 38-9)

It should be observed that "loaden" branches are heavy with fruit, so that growing old has its compensations.

The discussion of Wolsey's character gives us some necessary clues to a total interpretation of the man. This is the man who was "the great child of honour" (IV, ii, 6). The phrase is rich in meaning. R. A. Foakes points out that "child" carries overtones from chivalry and romance. But at the same time, the phrase suggests that Wolsey was no more than a "child" until he lost his glamorous "honour": we are given a new perspective by which we can see Wolsey as innocent, or at least childish and immature. From the beginning of the scene Katherine is ready to make allowances. Griffith's narration of Wolsey's death draws her pity, and her condemnation of the Cardinal's faults is spoken "with charity" (IV, ii, 33). The verse in this part of the scene is highly appropriate to the chastened solemnity of the occasion. It is extremely direct and unadorned.

He fell sick suddenly, and grew so ill
He could not sit his mule. . . .
At last, with easy roads, he came to Leicester . . .

. . . and three nights after this
 About the hour of eight . . .
 (IV, ii, 15-6; 17; 25-6)

The homely details suggest that we are at last coming close to some important "truth". But the chronicle-account is given a kind of transforming lucidity.

So went to bed, where eagerly his sickness
 Pursued him still.
 (IV, ii, 24-5)

"Eagerly" is an unexpectedly glowing word: this death is in some way bright, special and fated.

Katherine's attack on Wolsey is in verse of sinewy strength.

one that by suggestion
 Tied all the kingdom; simony was fair-play;
 His own opinion was his law: 'ith' presence
 He would say untruths, and be ever double
 Both of his words and meaning.
 (IV, ii, 35-9)

The economy of "tied all the kingdom" and "simony was fair-play" tautens the poetry. "Say untruths" has the tone of charitable rebuke: Katherine does not directly use the word "lies". Finally Katherine turns from the grand faults of the Cardinal to the faults he shared with most people.

Of his own body he was ill, and gave
 The clergy ill example.
 (IV, ii, 43-4)

The Cardinal who ranked himself "with princes" (IV, ii, 35), failed to show this basic self-respect. Katherine comes to the very heart of Wolsey's evil: the evil becomes poor and unglamorous. These were the Cardinal's "evil manners" (IV, ii, 45) - for all his polish, he failed to have the genuine "good manners" required by society.

Griffith's defence is based partly on Wolsey's contribution to learning, partly on his generosity, but mainly on the evidence of his death. The verse is lucid and beautiful.

His overthrow heap'd happiness upon him,
For then, and not till then, he felt himself
And found the blessedness of being little.
(IV, ii, 64-6)

Now Katherine is obliged to acknowledge "the religious truth" of this charitable account (IV, ii, 74). The change of attitude is not sentimentalisation: it is the logical progress of a spiritual soul away from rash judgment.

Patience be near me still, and set me lower.
(IV, ii, 76)

Katherine gains in dignity by allowing herself to be "set lower". "Patience" is the appropriate servant for her. Long ago Wolsey protested against the "ignorant tongues" that were "the chronicles" of his action (I, ii, 71-6). Now at last he has an "honest chronicler" (IV, ii, 72).

The vision of the crowning with garlands proves that Katherine's friends indeed "live not here" (III, ii, 89). It is a very beautiful invention, reminiscent of the conclusions to Pericles and The Winter's Tale.

Saw ye not even now a blessed troop
Invite me to a banquet, whose bright faces
Cast thousand beams upon me, like the sun?
They promis'd me eternal happiness,
And brought me garlands, Griffith, which I feel
I am not worthy yet to wear. I shall assuredly.
(IV, ii, 87-92)

The passive and amazed wonderment is suggested in the simple, almost child-like, "bright faces . . . like the sun". But the present

situation floods back on Katherine: "I am not worthy yet". The iron strength of her character re-asserts itself: "I shall assuredly". This unexpected display of human resolution is able to give a new dimension to the meaning of the vision. It is characteristic of Shakespeare that the mood induced by the vision should be broken by the entrance of the rude messenger. Now Katherine must display her new strength in the old battle with the "unmannerly" world. She turns on the messenger with angry rebuke. Then she must allow entrance to Capuchius, patiently re-affirm her loyalty to the King, and selflessly look to the needs of her household. She is journeying to a "celestial harmony" (IV, ii, 80), but others have temporal needs: she begs for her men

That they may have their wages duly paid 'em.
(IV, ii, 150)

Katherine is at once aware of her duties to the world, and her duties to God. This gives added strength to her final turning towards the latter.

Say his long trouble now is passing
Out of this world.
(IV, ii, 62-3)

Not "away from" the world, but positively "out of" it: death is a breakthrough as well as a loss. Katherine's final speech suggests a fixity on the divine object, which strengthens her even as she gradually dismisses comfort.

mine eyes grow dim. Farewell
My lord. Griffith farewell. Nay Patience,
You must not leave me yet. I must to bed,
Call in more women.
(IV, ii, 164-7)

The solemn rhythms of grief are felt in the heavy stresses "Farewell/

My lord. Griffith farewell." But strength of character emerges in the determination with which each step of the progress is accepted. At last, as she contemplates her grave, she is again fully a queen in pride.

although unqueen'd, yet like
A queen, and daughter to a king, inter me.
I can no more.

(IV, ii, 171-3)

The scene ends triumphantly. We should carry with us to the end of the play the sense of Katherine as the supreme agent of divine grace: it is principally through her activity the joyful resolution is possible.

The death of Katherine restores her to queenship, but it is also part of an irrevocable historical process. In The Winter's Tale, restitution is complete, without reference to the supernatural world. The play is full of Christian thinking, but the essential pattern is a pagan cyclical pattern. In Henry VIII, the balance has shifted. Vestigially, the pagan cyclical pattern remains: Anne is as perfect a Queen as Katherine. But the over-riding impulse is linear. The major comfort is not that everything is restored as it was, but that heaven makes history meaningful. The play is a pilgrimage towards a goal. Katherine yearns for the goal of death: "Those that my trust must grow to live not here" (III, i, 89). We never see Anne on-stage after her coronation scene. We are not supposed to feel the same sense of the old situation restored that we feel when Leontes and Hermione are re-united. History must be accepted as a progress towards death. The King can speak of his own death.

when I am in heaven, I shall desire

To see what this child does, and bless my maker.
(V, iv, 67-8)

Much is still to be unfolded. Even the newborn child is under the claim of death.

she must die,
She must, the saints must have her.
(V, iv, 59-60)

Restitution is only partial on earth. Each generation passes away, and only at the Apocalypse does the forward movement end. Our eyes must be set on a distant prospect, in order to begin to understand. "Our children's children/ Shall see this" (V, iv, 54-5).

Dissatisfaction with the fifth act of the play mainly springs from a failure to understand the purpose of its structure. Throughout the act we are obliged to keep in mind a double action: the labour of the Queen, and the conspiracy against Cranmer. The conspiracy is always to be seen in the context of this other action. The management of time is highly important. The conspiracy springs into life in the night-time: with the morning, its insubstantiality is proved. Gardiner himself emphasises that the conspiracy is an interruption of the proper business of night.

These should be hours for necessities
Not for delights; times to repair our nature
With comfortable repose, and not for us
To waste these times.
(V, i, 2-5)

The conspiracy becomes a symbolic extension of the troubled, fantasy-ridden night endured by the King and Queen. Gardiner and Lovell have a crazy temporary appearance of substantiality.

give your friend

Some touch of your late business: affairs that walk
 (As they say spirits do) at midnight, have
 In them a wilder nature than the business
 That seeks dispatch by day.
 (V, i, 12-16)

The oppressed brain exaggerates anxieties. In the reality of morning, this plot will prove to have had the insubstantiality of a bad dream. It is not unlike A Midsummer Night's Dream, where in the morning the confusion-bringing fairies disappear, "following darkness like a dream" (V, i, 393). We should notice the illogicality of Lovell, who never answers the question about his "business", but seems entirely occupied with something else, despite his "haste" (V, i, 11).

My lord, I love you,
 And durst command a secret to your ear
 Much weightier than this work. The queen's in labour
 They say in great extremity, and fear'd
 She'll with the labour end.
 (V, i, 16-20)

This news is so important that it must attract a major part of our interest. At the same time, we quickly see the comic side of Gardiner - his fussy impetuosity and aggressiveness.² His smallness of stature allows us not to be too disturbed by his bloodthirsty projects: we do not have any fears that he will succeed.

But sir, sir,
 Hear me Sir Thomas . . .
 (V, i, 26-7)

The nagging repetition of "Sir Thomas" - nine times in fifty lines - suggest an unskilful attempt to create a feeling of intimacy. The constant injunctions to the listener re-inforce this: "Hear me . . . let me tell you . . . take't of me . . . I may tell it you" (V, i, 27; 29; 30; 42). At the same time, we become aware of Gardiner's egotism.

This is not a deep, concealed, subtle egotism like Wolsey's, but a shallow, unreflecting self-conceit.

LOVELL. Th' Archbishop
Is the King's hand and tongue, and who dare speak
One syllable against him?

GARDINER. Yes, yes, Sir Thomas,
There are that dare.
(V, i, 37-40)

The self-satisfaction of "There are that dare" is comic. The lightness of tone of the conspiracy plot is appropriate: a light re-enactment of the theme of pride, earlier treated tragically in Wolsey, exorcises our more sombre thoughts. We could compare A Midsummer Night's Dream, where the lovers go through real distress in the wood, but we cannot credit the reality of the distress after the Pyramus and Thisbe episode.

The motif of the sleepless King is frequent in Shakespeare - here we have the supreme example of the cares of state, where even as the Queen is in labour, political business needs attention from the King. The Queen's labour-pains are of course a source of distress to the King: he goes through some kind of initiation into sorrow, just as Anne finds "Almost each pang a death" (V, i, 69).

Leave me alone,
For I must think of that which company
Would not be friendly to.
(V, i, 74-6)

Primero would be entirely irrelevant: the King must go through his distress alone. At the same time, he must make the political decision which shows that he has reached full self-sufficiency in judgment: the decision to trust Cranmer. So the King grows in stature doubly.

Like Pericles, he must go through great anxiety about his child: but the successful gaining of a child is evidence of progress of spirit. At the same time, he must grow to a full understanding of men, so that he can choose ministers on responsible grounds.

The encounter between the King and Cranmer shows that the King is coming to a maturity of political understanding. Perhaps with Buckingham, the King was too inclined to overlook faults. He was dazzled by Buckingham's eloquence.

when we
Almost with ravished listening could not hold
His hour of speech a minute.
(I, ii, 119-21)

Very likely the same happened with Wolsey.

he hath a witchcraft
Over the King in his tongue.
(III, ii, 18-19)

Cranmer is not a dazzling politician: his loyalty is not expressed in eloquent words. Unlike Wolsey (I, ii), Cranmer does not dismiss his critics with contempt but is willing to face them, "most thoroughly to be winnowed" (V, i, 110). It is the King himself who intuitively grasps that Cranmer's enemies are perjured; Cranmer need not defend himself verbally.

He has strangled
His language in his tears.
(V, i, 156-7)

The bond of loyalty is intuitively appreciated by the educated generosity of the King. There will always be false witnesses; as the King acknowledges with grim understatement: "such things have been done" (V, i, 133). No verbal answer will satisfy all these attacks, and

ultimately the entire machinery of the law is unsatisfactory.

Ween you of better luck,
I mean of perjured witness, than your master
Whose minister you are, whiles here he liv'd
Upon this naughty earth?
(V, i, 135-8)

The King must make judgments on the evidence of his heart.

Stand up, good Canterbury,
Thy truth and thy integrity is rooted
In us thy friend.
(V, i, 113-5)

The King manifests his maturity by the obvious rightness of his heart's promptings. He senses truth on a deeper level than would a man merely rationally judicious.

Like the rest of the play, the fifth act shows excellent dramaturgical strategy. Just at the point where we are in danger of forgetting the Queen in our concern for Cranmer, the Old Lady bursts in with news of the birth of the child. The Old Lady's preposterous joking adds to the confusion of the moment.

KING. Is the Queen deliver'd?
Say ay, and of a boy.

OLD LADY. Ay, ay my liege,
And of a lovely boy: the God of heaven
Both now and ever bless her: 'tis a girl
Promises boys hereafter.
(V, i, 162-6)

The King hurries out in confusion. For a moment, all other business must be abandoned. While the King is momentarily preoccupied, the plotters, like naughty little boys, take their opportunity.

Spedding allows the first scene of the fifth act to be Shakespeare's, but attributes the rest of the fifth act to Fletcher. Perhaps there are grounds to believe that there is a falling-off from

the full Shakespearean power in the handling of the conspiracy: but no poet works at a constant heat and pressure of excitement. Certainly both in design and execution, the second scene of the fifth act (I follow Foakes in his division of scenes) is entirely characteristic of Shakespeare. The motif of the King who hides or disguises himself, later to reveal himself in glory, is a favourite in Shakespeare. We remember the Duke in Measure for Measure, and Prince Hal in Henry IV, Part One.

Yet herein will I imitate the sun
 Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
 To smother up his beauty from the world,
 That when he please again to be himself
 Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at
 By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
 Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.

(I, ii, 220-6)

While the King's power is momentarily obscured, violent conspiracy may break out: but this conspiracy is seen to be ludicrous, when the sun breaks through the clouds. The conspiracy in Henry VIII bears strong resemblances to the conspiracy in The Tempest. In neither case do we feel that the conspirators are sufficiently repentant to deserve pardon. The pardon is a free gift from the King made possible by his superior power. The conspirators remain despicable, but their power for evil is limited.

From the King's point of view the utmost malice of Gardiner is no more than a breach of manners. The King watches the lords and is struck both by their criminality, and by their pettiness.

Is this the honour they do one another?
 'Tis well there's one above 'em yet.

(V, ii, 25-6)

He had expected from them "at least good manners" (V, ii, 28). Instead he watches the pantomime of the lords humiliating Cranmer, by shutting the door on him. The Lord Chancellor opens proceedings against Cranmer with words ironically appropriate to the conspirators.

we all are men
In our own nature frail, and capable
Of our flesh; few are angels.
(V, ii, 44-6)

Of course it is Cranmer who understands this, and his replies show him humble and even-tempered. He appeals to them to acknowledge his conscientious devotion to duty. The plainness of the language is appropriate to the speaker. "The end/ Was ever to do well" (V, ii, 70-1) is unpretentious and self-effacing. But the masculine strength of the subdued imagery should be observed:

Men that make
Envy and crooked malice nourishment,
Dare bite the best.
(V, ii, 77-9)

There is genuine authority of tone in the emphatic word "nourishment". Cranmer speaks with same impressive restraint as does Wolsey after his fall.

Love and meekness, lord,
Become a churchman better than ambition.
Win straying souls with modesty again,
Cast none away.
(V, ii, 96-9)

Shakespeare knows that it is always the fanatic who is readiest with charges of fanaticism. "My lord, my lord, you are a sectary," cries Gardiner (V, ii, 104), incensed by Cranmer's tolerance.

Gardiner's plot suffers a triple disruption: the protests of Cromwell (who proves that men have at least some capacity for friend-

ship); the revelation of Cranmer, which turns the "trial" into a silly game; and the entry of the King, which is the dramatic culmination of the scene. The King's fury erupts at once.

You were ever good at sudden commendations,
 Bishop of Winchester . . . You play the spaniel
 And think with wagging of your tongue to win me;
 But whatsoe'er thou take'st me for, I'm sure
 Thou hast a cruel nature and a bloody.
 (V, ii, 156-7; 160-3)

The controlled sarcasm followed by the spat-out syllables "Bishop of Winchester" is highly effective. The King has no illusions about the cruelty and bloodiness of the plot. His clemency is dependent upon the futility of the plotters. The King can treat the lords like schoolboys. He is contemptuous of their silly tricks. His anger is sudden, but it equally suddenly abates.

Well, well, my lords, respect him . . .
 Make me no more ado, but all embrace him.
 Be friends for shame, my lords.
 (V, ii, 187; 192-3)

The mocking good-humour defuses the situation and makes of the bloody conspiracy a mere squabble. Human nature remains the same, but seen from the royal perspective the futility of evil is apparent. But this is an especially appropriate time for this display of tolerance springing from strength.

Come lords: we trifle time away; I long
 To have this young one made a Christian.
 (V, ii, 212-3)

The main action of the last act at last declares itself openly: we have already had enough hints and anticipations to prepare ourselves for it. By an ironic reversal normal business of state is a mere "trifle" and celebration is serious.

Shakespeare does not show his full power in this scene: but the verse is always highly efficient, and the dramaturgy swift. The scene forms an important part of the overall structure: the triumph of truth and tolerance over a more violent contrary opinion recapitulates a main concern of the play; the reduction of violence to evil manners, thus emphasising the importance of "good manners", has enormous importance. The pattern of ideas: "malice . . . patience . . . manners . . . study . . . conscience": is exactly that which emerges from the play as a whole. Gardiner's character is entirely consistent with his character in the previous scene: he has the same excited over-insistence on his point.

My lord, my lord, y' are a sectary,
That's the plain truth.
(V, ii, 104-5)

Gardiner's preposterous self-abasement before the King (V, ii, 148-55) is the final proof of his smallness of stature: here the spirit of comic exaggeration is surely Shakespearean.

Dread sovereign, how much are we bound to heaven
In daily thanks, that gave us such a prince.
(V, ii, 148-9)

The plain dignity of Cranmer is most effectively highlighted by this contrast. Further evidence of Shakespeare is felt in the frequent proverbial quality of the poetry.

SUFFOLK. 'Tis the right ring, by heaven: I told ye all
When first we put this dangerous stone a-rolling
'Twould fall upon ourselves.

NORFOLK. Do you think my lords
The King will suffer but the little finger
Of this man to be vex'd?
(V, ii, 137-41)

Shakespeare has a manner of catching a phrase which is not quite a well-worn proverb, but nevertheless has the natural rightness of a proverb.

Ye blew the fire that burns ye: now have at ye.
(V, ii, 147)

This is a scene in which Shakespeare partly holds himself in reserve: even here, there are superabundant marks of his workmanship.

The celebration scenes (V, iii; V, iv) show a return of the full Shakespearean complexity and power. There is tremendous comic gusto in the scene between the Porter and his Man. There is almost a surrealistic or dreamlike quality to the scene. It is permeated with military imagery: but the fighting becomes something crazily joyful.

Unless we sweep them from the door with cannons . . .
Is this the Moorfields to muster in? . . .
his nose . . . a mortar-piece . . .
suddenly a file of boys behind 'em, loose-shot,
deliver'd such a file of pebbles. . . .
An army cannot rule 'em.
(V, iii, 12; 41-5; 54-6; 76)

This introduction of war-imagery into a celebration of a prospect of peace, allows the integration of aggressive feelings into our assent with the play's conclusion. War and sex are inseparably entangled in the subconscious effect of the scene. The release of sexual excitement is explicitly emphasised.

Or have we some strange Indian with the great
tool come to court, the women so besiege us? Bless me,
what a fry of fornication is at door. On my Christian
conscience, this one christening will beget a thousand:
here be father, godfather, and all together.
(V, iii, 32-7)

The weak interjections: "bless me", "on my Christian conscience", are comically inadequate to deal with the situation. The crowd of

bobbing heads and gaping mouths is a massive sexual monster.

ye rude slaves, leave your gaping. . . .
 . . . I belong to the larder. . . .
 I'll scratch your heads . . .
 . . . any
 That had a head to hit . . .
 (V, iii, 2-4; 8; 22-3)

"One sound cudgel of four foot", effective weapon though it is, is rapidly worn out by the crowd's unceasing amorphous appetite (V, iii, 18). The weapons of "some forty truncheoners" (V, iii, 50-1) suddenly pop up; a spurt of pebbles jets up out of nowhere (V, iii, 54-6). A descendant of poor Bardolph indestructibly stands by the door everlastingly discharging mucus.

he should be a brazier by his face, for o' my
 conscience twenty o' the dogdays reign in his nose . . .
 that firedrake did I hit three times on the nose,
 and three times was his nose discharg'd against me;
 he stands there like a mortar-piece to blow us.
 (V, iii, 34-41; 42-5)

Next to this incarnation of sexual grossness stands an ineffective little woman, who becomes comically involved in the confusion.

There was a haberdasher's wife of small wit near
 him, that rail'd upon me till her pink'd porringer
 feel off her head . . . I miss'd the meteor once, and
 hit that woman, who cried out 'Clubs', when I
 might see from far some forty truncheoners draw to her
 succour.
 (V, iii, 45-51)

The dreamlike illogicality of the succession of events has a wild humour. The Porter and his Man wait bemused until the Lord Chamberlain rouses them to their task. The interlude of disruption is brought to an end by the sound of trumpets (V, iii, 81). Mortified by the Lord Chamberlain's rebuke, the Porter and his Man apply themselves with almost exaggerated conscientiousness. This brief scene is masterly in

suggesting the potential for health and vigour offered by the crowd, so long as it is kept "at door". Ideas suggested in the earlier description of the crowd (IV, i, 70-81) are given full and entertaining development. A dimension of amoral joy has its place in the resolution of the play.

The christening of Elizabeth and the prophecy of her glorious reign are events for which we have been given preparation much earlier in the play (II, iii, 75-9; III, ii, 48-52). The celebration of the child's birth finally demonstrates the breaking out of the play from the pattern of tragic cycles of the wheel of fortune. It is a much stronger affirmation of direction than is the failure of the plot against Cranmer, which prepares us for this greater climax. It is through "the action of good women" that this conclusion is possible: the really serious business of the fifth act has so far happened off-stage - Queen Anne's painful labour, and the birth of the child. Now at last, we see the child on the stage. The delay between our hearing of the queen's extremity" (V, i, 18), and our seeing the child, heightens our anticipation. The birth of the child represents for the King the completion of an important moral journey. The panorama which opens out for us as we listen to Cranmer's prophecy increases our awe at the magnitude of the consequences of the events of the play.

The poetry of Cranmer's prophecy is noble and compelling. The play has shown how gradually truth evolves from a context of confusion and distress: it is fitting that even at the end, we are only at the beginning of the new prospect of events.

a thousand thousand blessings,

Which time shall bring to ripeness.
(V, iv, 18-9)

As the prophet warms to his theme, so his language becomes more charged.

All princely graces
That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,
With all the virtues that attend the good,
Shall still be doubled on her.
(V, iv, 25-8)

The line "That mould up such a mighty piece as this is" is especially resonant and memorable. Then a pattern of heavily weighted short phrases, like a litany, is established.

Truth shall nurse her,
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her;
She shall be loved and feared: her own shall bless her.
(V, iv, 28-30)

Not a superfluous word: but with increasing emotion Cranmer embarks on a slightly longer flight.

Her foes stand like a field of beaten corn
And hang their heads in sorrow: good grows with her.
(V, iv, 31-2)

We return from the noble image to the insistent pattern: "good grows with her". At last the rhetorical structure is abandoned: the vision of the golden age breaks through.

In her days every man shall eat in safety
Under his own vine what he plants, and sing
The merry songs of peace unto his neighbours.
(V, iv, 33-5)

It is appropriate to this visionary strain that England should become Israel. The simplicity and dignity of the language draw from the Bible. But the poet does not stop with this golden age: he continues by describing the reign of James. Judicious for contemporary reasons as this might have been, it is also aesthetically more satisfactory. It is the

impulse of the prophecy that there is no end to the process begun upon. In praising James, a prophecy from Genesis is used to form the basis of a vision of America.

Wherever the bright sun of Heaven shall shine,
His honour, and the greatness of his name
Shall be, and make new nations. He shall flourish
And like a mountain-cedar reach his branches
To all the plains about him: our children's children
Shall see this, and bless heaven.

(V, iv, 50-5)

Beyond the death of Elizabeth, events continue to open out. But then Cranmer turns back to the child. "Many days shall see her," he promises (V, iv, 57); not the commonplace "she shall see many days"; for the Queen sits in the centre, and the days go about her.

The King is overcome with emotion, and all at once realises that he has come through a great moral crisis.

O lord archbishop,
Thou hast made me now a man; never before
This happy child did I get anything.

(V, iv, 63-5)

At last the King has come through his protracted distress. The agony of his conscience was bound intimately with his failure both as king and man. The constant reminder of his spiritual failure was his inability to father a child.

Hence I took a thought
This was a judgment on me, that my kingdom
(Well worthy the best heir o' th' world) should not
Be gladd'd in't by me.

(II, iv, 191-4)

Gradually we have moved away from that moment of uneasiness. The King has achieved "manhood". The occasion is holy as well as joyful.

This little one shall make it Holy-day.

(V, iv, 76)

With confidence the King can look forward to when he is "in heaven" (V, iv, 67). Together with emotional maturity comes a sense of acceptance by God.

Most critics see the centre of the play as the pattern of "falls": Buckingham, Wolsey, Katherine, and (potentially) Cranmer.³ But the pattern, important as it is, only points towards the centre, and the centre is the King. Buckingham in his fall sees his own mere contingency beside the enduring, necessary power of the King: "May he live/ Longer than I have time to tell his years" (II, i, 90-1). Wolsey too knows how brief his own part has been, and how soon he must be shuffled off the stage.

Serve thou the King, and prithe lead me in.
(III, ii, 450)

The glamorous politician is not a northern star but a falling star, and our attention is redirected towards the true centre, "the King". All the political distress seems an outer manifestation of some inner upheaval ultimately located in the conscience of the King. The "good women", who do so much to change the course of events, direct their attentions to helping the King. They are examples of obedience, and act as some kind of ratification and assurance to the rightness of the royal decisions.

The hearts of princes kiss obedience.
(III, i, 162)

Katherine must make the greatest sacrifices: she must recognise that her historical role is over: she must see herself entirely as the King's object.

Say his long trouble now is passing

Out of this world.

(IV, ii, 162-3)

Urgent circumstances force the old Queen to the periphery. The impossible knot must be cut: the way must be made open for the new Queen. Otherwise, the King must continue in the dead cycle. In some way, the King must accept that his conscience will be "wounded" (II, ii, 74). Before he can be "made . . . a man" (V, iv, 64), he must be emotionally overturned. He must fulfil an inner journey of self-examination. The anguish of the earlier nocturnal self-appraisal (II, ii) is recapitulated in the less desperate solitude of anticipation (V, i). When all this is over, the King is more ready to fulfil his public role, and become one in purpose with his subjects.

This day let no man think
 'Has business in his house.
 (V, iv, 74-5)

Only after much that is painful and private is the impulse towards privacy, for this special occasion, laid aside.

FOOTNOTES

All quotations from Henry VIII are from the edition by R. A. Foakes.

Introduction

¹See Bertram, Shakespeare and "The Two Noble Kinsmen".

²Spedding, "On the several shares of Shakespeare and Fletcher in the play of 'Henry VIII'."

³Alexander, "Conjectural History".

⁴Knight, "The Crown of Life".

⁵Partridge, "The Problem of 'Henry VIII' Re-opened."

⁶Foakes, "On the First Folio Text of 'Henry VIII'."

⁷Ellis-Fermor, "Jacobean Tragedy", 201-26.

⁸See Kermode, "What is Shakespeare's 'Henry VIII' about?"

Chapter One

¹Many authorities could be cited. Among others, Coleridge, Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century, 649-73; Lamb, Specimens of the English Poets, 342-3; Swinburne, A Study of Shakespeare, 82-94; Eliot, Elizabethan Essays, 77-8; M. C. Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, 240-50; L. C. Knights, Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson, 292-7; Una Ellis-Fermor, Jacobean Tragedy, 201-26; E. Waith, The Pattern of Tragicomedies in Beaumont and Fletcher; J. F. Danby, Poets on Fortune's Hill, 152-206; R. Ornstein, Moral Vision of Jacobean Comedy, 63-9; C. Leech, The John Fletcher Plays.

²Bradbrook, Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy, 248.

³Where Beaumont collaborates with Fletcher, attributions to Fletcher are partly speculative. I follow Cyrus Hoy, in the absence of any better authority. However I give Fletcher the benefit of the doubt, in attributing to him some of the best speeches in the plays where the authors collaborated. I place emphasis on Bonduca and Valentinian, which Fletcher almost certainly wrote alone.

⁴References to plays by Beaumont and Fletcher are to the edition by Glover and Waller. Except in the case of Bonduca, I give reference by volume and page, as the division of scenes in this edition is usually incomplete.

⁵Waith, "John Fletcher and The Art of Declamation", 232.

⁶This passage draws upon L. C. Knights, Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson, 292-4.

⁷Danby, Poets on Fortune's Hill, 164, 170.

⁸Coleridge, Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century, 657.

⁹For example, by A. A. Parker. See "Henry VIII in Shakespeare and Calderon".

¹⁰Fripp, Shakespeare, Man and Artist, II, 780.

Chapter Two

¹Coleridge, Shakespearean Criticism, I, 214.

²Wilson Knight's early essay is reprinted in the Signet Edition of Henry VIII, 217-25.

³Maxwell's edition, 147.

⁴Partridge, Shakespeare's Bawdy, 135.

Chapter Three

¹Spedding, "On the Several Shares of Shakespeare and Fletcher in the play of 'Henry VIII'," 120.

²On the character of Gardiner, see Paul Bertram, Shakespeare and "The Two Noble Kinsmen", 173-5.

³For instance, Frank Kermode, in "What is 'Henry VIII' about?"

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B29926